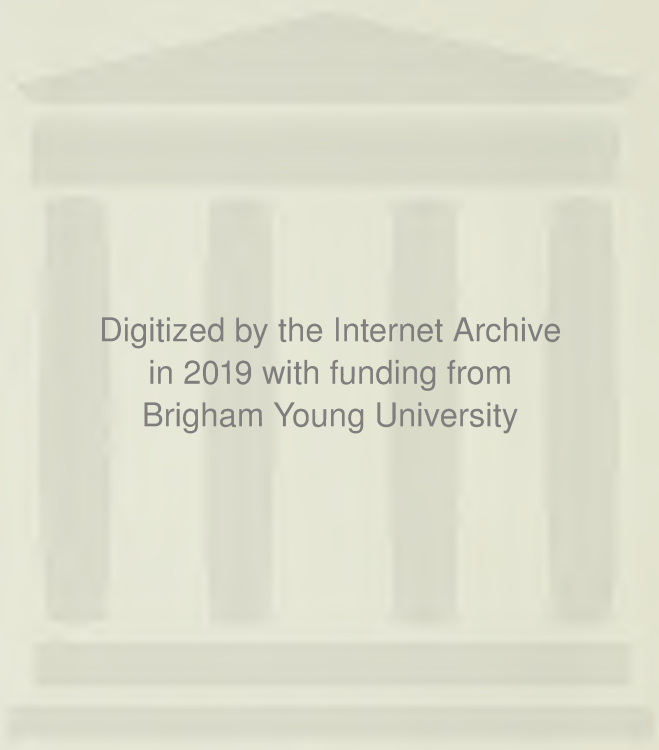


HAROLD B LEE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO, UTAH



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2019 with funding from
Brigham Young University

220.8
K159.5

119

BIBLICAL HISTORY

FOR

SCHOOL AND HOME.

METHODICALLY ARRANGED, WITH APPENDED
MORAL LESSONS.

BY

JULIUS KATZENBERG,

AUTHOR OF THE "PHONETIC HEBREW PRIMER," "BLOSSOM AND
FRUIT," "FAITH AND DEED," ETC.

PARTS I.—V., Complete.



Published and Printed by
THE AMERICAN HEBREW PUBLISHING HOUSE,
THE BLOCH PRINTING COMPANY,
CINCINNATI AND CHICAGO.

HAROLD B. LEE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO, UTAH

.Copyrighted According to Law.

PREFACE.

THE author, in placing this work before the public, has but little to say in explanation.

Any one at all conversant with the work in our Sabbath-schools, must be aware of the fact that we have been hitherto without any text-book of Biblical History suitable for children of the tender ages of eight, nine, or ten years. Moreover, the study is often nothing more than a mere repetition of the names and facts of a story, without any attempt being made to bring the more important moral lessons therein contained within the grasp of the child's intellect.

To nourish these tender plants in accordance with their tastes and natures, to interest our young children in the study of the sacred writings and their sublime lessons, is the aim and object of this effort.

Another no less important reason urged the author to this publication. It is a gratifying fact that many of our young men and women—to their praise be it mentioned—are instructors in our Sabbath-schools, thus offering a God-pleasing sacrifice on the altar of Israel's sanctuary.

To assist them in their difficult task, that their efforts might be productive of and crowned with the best results, this work is placed in their hands.

A chapter or part of one might be read by the teacher, and the proper questions, as they suggest themselves from the text, be asked ; the interest of the pupils will be awakened, and their diligence in their home study ensured.

The part thus read will be the subject for the next recitation, and the scholars will come to school cheerful and well prepared.

The division into parts, each for one year only, in a neat little volume, will prove an incentive to the learner and a saving to the parents.

Go forth, then, thou little companion of our youth, and become their true friend and their unfailing guide to real happiness here and hereafter.

THE AUTHOR.

BIBLICAL HISTORY.

PART I.

I. THE CREATION.

There was a time when heaven and earth were not. God, who alone WAS, IS, and ever WILL BE, created them, and all which they contain, in six days. By His mighty word: "LET THERE BE," LIGHT appeared on the first day; the BLUE SKY became visible on the second; DRY LAND AND OCEANS, and GRASS, HERBS, and FRUIT-TREES, CONTAINING SEED, on the third; SUN, MOON, AND STARS, on the fourth; FISHES IN THE WATERS AND BIRDS IN THE AIR on the fifth; and *cattle and wild beasts*, and at last MAN on the sixth day.

God formed man of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, an everlasting soul. Thus man became THE HUMAN BEING, created in the LIKENESS OF GOD. He called his name Adam, "man of earth." Then God said: "It is not good that man should be alone, I will make him a helpmate." And God formed one out of a rib of Adam, while he was fast asleep. When he awoke, and saw another human being at his side, he exclaimed: "Truly, thou art like myself, a part of myself, thou shalt be called woman, because thou art a part of man. Adam named her Eve (Chavah) *i. e.*, mother of all living. And God blessed the first

couple and made them rulers over all other created beings. The work of creation being completed, and found good in the eyes of the Creator, He rested on the seventh day and blessed and hallowed it.

MORAL LESSONS.—God is the Creator of the world. His will and word brought forth everything. He is omnipotent, that is the Almighty. He can do whatever He pleases.

“By the word of the Eternal were the heavens made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host.”—Ps. xxxiii. 6.

Everything has a beginning; God is without beginning; He is uncreated; He was, He is, and He ever will be. He is eternal, *i. e.*, everlasting.

“I am the first and I am the last, and beside Me there is no God.”—Isa. xlv. 6.

God is allwise. The various objects of the universe were called into existence in the best order and for the best purpose.

“How manifold are Thy works, O Eternal! in wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy riches.”—Ps. civ. 24.

God is allkind. Everything which we possess and enjoy is a gift of His love and kindness. His loving care reaches even the least of His creatures.—We are created for companionship. To assist each other, to bear in common the sorrows and joys of life; and to cultivate and practice the principles of peace and harmony in house, in school, and in society at large, should be our ardent aim.

The Sabbath is a day of rest, blessed and sanctified by God for the sake of man. May we ever keep it holy by resting from our daily pursuits, and by appearing before

Him in our temples or synagogues, praising with devoted hearts His greatness, power, wisdom, and goodness.

II. THE FIRST SIN.

God planted a beautiful garden, called "Paradise," in one of the mildest and most fertile parts of Asia, and appointed it as a dwelling-place for the first people. Adam and Eve were to keep the garden in good order, and by their industry add to its fertility. Their mode of living was so plain and moderate, that they were free from bodily ailings; they were so kind to each other, that angry feelings found no place within their hearts. They could eat of the fruit of any of the trees but one, namely, "the tree of knowledge of good and evil," in the midst of the garden, for God said: "Of that tree you shall not eat, lest you might die."

Adam and Eve did not mind the word of God. A serpent, on meeting the woman near the forbidden tree, tempted her to eat thereof, and she looked at the fruit, ate of it, and brought some to her husband who ate also, and thus the first sin was committed, and both the sinners felt that they had disobeyed. They had lost their innocence; their nakedness brought shame into their faces and fear into their hearts, and they sought refuge behind the trees from the face of the Eternal. But they heard the voice of God saying: "Adam, where art thou?" Adam replied: "I am afraid to be seen, for I am naked." God said: "Who told thee that thou art naked? Hast thou eaten of the forbidden fruit?" Adam confessed his guilt, but blamed his wife for it; and Eve said that the serpent tempted her, and she did eat. They were all

punished. The serpent was to crawl on its belly and eat dust, and Adam and Eve were to leave the garden and eat their bread by the sweat of their brows.

MORAL LESSONS.—Even in the midst of splendor and plenty, we ought to work for our physical and moral well-being. Idleness is weak and sinful. Innocence makes life pleasant; sin causes uneasiness, shame, and punishment. Keep aloof from forbidden things and dangerous places, be they ever so inviting. Listen not to the smooth voice of enticement; think of the duties of love and obedience which you owe to your parents, teachers, and to your God. Guard your good names. “It is his or her fault” is a poor excuse, which will not lessen sin nor punishment.

Know that we cannot hide ourselves from God, for He is everywhere, Omnipresent. He knows all we think and do, He is Omniscient.

III. CAIN AND ABEL.

Cain and Abel, sons of Adam and Eve, were brothers of unlike characters. The rough and wild Cain took to tilling the ground; the mild and gentle Abel was fond of keeping his flocks. Cain’s work was hard and trying. An unfavorable season or a sudden storm probably sometimes ruined his labor and destroyed his cherished hopes. Instead of renewing his work with confidence in God, he likely became then discouraged and discontented, and when he saw the herds of his brother thriving and increasing, envy crept into his heart, and in course of time grew into a settled hatred.

Both brothers once offered sacrifices unto God; Cain, of

the fruit of the field, and Abel, of the firstlings of his flock. God, who delights in a good heart, favorably received the offering of Abel; but Cain's devotion, mixed with ill feelings, did not please Him. Cain left the altar more depressed than before, and his grief, envy, and anger became plainly visible on his face. A better voice within him, the voice of God, then asked him: "Why art thou so angry, Cain; why lookest thou so sad? Is it not that if thou improve, thou wilt rise and be at ease; but if not, the sin is lying in wait for thee at the door; shun it; gain the mastery over thy passions." But this divine voice within him had no lasting effect on him.

One day he met his brother in the field, and without cause, by a heavy blow felled him to the earth and left him. On looking back, however, and not seeing his brother follow him, the voice of God: "Where is thy brother Abel?" struck solemnly on his ear. Not yet aware that his brother was dead, he replied: "I do not know; am I the keeper of my brother?" But on retracing his steps and finding his brother lifeless, and seeing his ghastly features, then God, through the mighty voice of conscience, said to him: "What hast thou done? The earth which thou hast soiled and defiled by thy brother's blood will no longer yield its blessing unto thee; nor wilt thou find hereafter rest thereon. Henceforth shalt thou wander a fugitive and a vagabond."

Cain then felt the whole weight of his foul deed, and cried with deep sorrow: "My sin is too great, insufferable. If I am to wander about without Thy protection, O God! then whosoever will meet me will slay me." At this profound expression of sorrow, he received the assurance of God that no one would slay him. He left his home, driven by a troubled conscience from place to

place, in constant anxiety and restlessness, until at last he reached Nod, a place east of Eden, and stopped there.

But God blessed the sorrow-stricken parents with another son, whom they named Seth (Restitution.)

MORAL LESSONS.—Be ever grateful to your earthly benefactors and to your heavenly Father, for the innumerable acts of love and kindness constantly showered upon you. Be faithful and earnest in your devotions. Beware of envy, it is the root of many evils. Mind the warning words of your parents and teachers, and listen carefully to the voice of your conscience, which is the voice of God. Strike not thy brother or companion in an angry mood, lest the blow might prove fatal.

NOTE.—Some of the descendants of Cain are noted for their genius in art and industry. A certain Jubal is the inventor of the harp and flute, and of music. Tubal-Cain made the first implements for farming, hunting, etc., out of brass and iron. Jabal is known as the founder of pastoral life. Of the followers of Seth it is said that they began to call on the name of God (in divine worship). The people of this early period were blessed with longevity. Adam lived 930 years and Methuselah 969.

IV. NOAH.—THE FLOOD.

Noah, a son of Lamech, of the family line of Seth, had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The earth about that time (1656) was full of people, and they were very wicked. But Noah "walked with God;" that is, he led a righteous, perfect life, and therefore found grace in the eyes of God. Then God said to Noah: "The end of all flesh is nigh before me, for their corruption filleth the

earth. I will allow them yet one hundred and twenty years, and should they not improve, I shall destroy them by a flood. I shall, however, save thee and thy family, since I have found thee righteous before me; therefore make thee a large, strong ark (ship)."

Noah at once began the work, and, at the same time, informed the people of its ultimate purpose, and of their fate, if they would not repent; but, alas! his words were not heeded. The wicked people continued their evil doing, and carelessly looked on at the completion of the ark.

Then God said to Noah: "Go into the ark, thou, thy wife, thy three sons and their wives, and take with thee one pair of all kind of animals, seven pairs of the clean ones, and plenty of food for thee and for them." Noah obeyed, and after seven days the deluge broke forth. From the fountains of the deep, as well as from the clouds above, the water rushed forth in torrents for forty days and forty nights. Every possible attempt of the frightened people to save themselves failed, since the water rapidly rose to a height of fifteen cubits above the highest mountains, and all living creatures outside of the ark perished.

MORAL LESSONS.—Moral corruption leads to destruction. Follow not the evil ways of the wicked, and you will escape their fate. God has patience with the sinner and gives him time to repent. God is just, He rewards the good and punishes the wicked.

V. NOAH'S EXIT FROM THE ARK AND HIS OFFERING.

About one hundred and fifty days were the waters of the flood upon the earth when they began to subside,

and the ark rested on Mt. Ararat. Noah sent forth a raven to learn whether the waters had fallen, but it flew to and fro, leaving Noah in the dark. A dove, sent out seven days later, did not find a place to rest and soon returned.

After seven days, when sent out again, the dove came back toward evening with a fresh leaf of an olive-tree in the bill, and all in the ark looked at it with hope and joy as a sign that the waters were rapidly decreasing.

Soon thereafter God said to Noah: "Go forth from the ark with thy family and set free all the rest therein," and he obeyed. On looking about, Noah must have felt very sad. The earth, before the flood so fruitful and full of people, was now dreary and desolate. But he sought relief, and found it in thanking God for having saved his family and himself, and therefore he built an altar and offered thereon. God was pleased with Noah's offering and said: "I shall never smite again all living creatures, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." A beautiful rainbow appeared in the clouds, and God said: "This bow shall be the sign of the covenant between me and thee, and all living creatures, that I shall never destroy the earth again by a flood."

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said: "Be fruitful and multiply. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the heaven. All living things shall be yours for food, but you shall not eat thereof, while there is yet life (blood) within them. Your blood, however, on which your lives depends will I require at the hand of every beast and man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by

man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made He man."

MORAL LESSONS.—Gratitude is a virtue and a sacred duty. Ever remember gratefully favors received. God is kind and merciful; trust in Him. Honor and guard the likeness of God in yourselves and in others. Beware of cruelty toward animals.

VI. NOAH'S SONS.

After the flood, Noah began anew to till the ground as he did before. Besides his cornfields, he planted also a vineyard, and was successful in producing wine. Noah drank freely of the sweet juice of the grapes, without knowing its strength, and became drunk. Ham, on seeing his father lying unconsciously and in an unbecoming manner on the floor, reported it laughingly to his brothers. They, however, pitied their father, went in backward, and covered him. When Noah heard of the conduct of his sons, he praised the good behavior of Shem and Japheth and blessed them, but earnestly rebuked Ham for having so grossly violated the duty of honor and respect to a parent.

MORAL LESSONS.—Children, be careful and moderate, and more especially with things, the qualities of which you know not. Drunkenness is a vice; and the habitual drunkard is a curse to himself, a calamity to his family, and a disgrace to society. It is shameful and sinful to make fun of the low or fallen, but it is a crime to make sport of the weakness of a parent. Try to be ever worthy of the blessings of your parents, and never fail to honor and respect them.

Turn aside your eyes from things that are not decent; let improper language not enter your ears. Modesty is a guardian angel which guides us on the path of virtue.

“The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, shall the ravens of the valley pick out and the young eagles shall eat it.”—Prov. xxx. 17.

VII. THE TOWER OF BABEL.

Soon after the flood, Noah and his family left Ararat and proceeded to Shinar, a plain between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. Their descendants rapidly increased in number and strength, and had necessarily to spread farther and farther, to find room for themselves and their herds. To guard, however, against losing sight of each other, they resolved to build a city and a huge tower, whose top should reach to heaven. They thought that such a tower, which could be seen from distances far off, would prevent their entire separation, and might, moreover, serve as a stronghold and a place of safety in case of another flood. The people thereupon made brick and mortar, and in good earnest began to build. But God was not in their heart, and without His aid there is no success. It was certainly the will of the wise Creator that man should inhabit and cultivate the various parts of the earth. “Multiply and fill the earth,” was His blessing to the first people. God, therefore, did not favor their first great undertaking, and their plan utterly failed. The workmen became demoralized, and their language confounded, so that one would not listen to the other, and could not understand their orders, and the builders were forced to stop the great work, and the

people gradually scattered abroad over the earth. The family of Shem remained in Asia, that of Japheth moved westward toward Europe, and Ham's descendants went southward towards Africa. The city thus commenced received the name of Babel, which signifies confusion.

MORAL LESSONS.—Nothing can be accomplished by impure motives against the will of God, or in opposition to His wise plans.

“If the Eternal doth not build the house, the builders labor in vain: if the Eternal doth not guard the city, the watchman is in vain wakeful.”—Ps. cxxvii. i.

VIII. ABRAM.

Terah, a descendant of Shem, had three sons—Abram, Nahor, and Haran. They resided in Ur, of the Chaldees. Haran died, leaving a son named Lot, who was taken care of by his grandfather, and after Terah's death, by his uncle Abram. Abram's wife was Sarai, and Milkah, the daughter of Haram, was the wife of Nachor. Terah left Ur with his whole family and stopped in a city called Haran.

About this time the people had no clear conception of the One God. They worshipped the sun, moon, or stars, or made themselves images of wood or other materials, and bowed down to them. Such worship is idolatry, and the images are called idols. Abram was the only one who did not bow to these idols. He looked upon the heavenly bodies as objects created by some *unseen, superior Being, beyond and above nature*; and to this as his God he lifted up his heart and bowed in veneration. These advanced religious ideas of Abram probably

led to reflections such as these: If he remained among the idolators, might he not at last follow their example? If he condemned their practices, would he not get into conflict with his father and stir up the hatred of the people against himself? If he looked on passively, would he not be considered as one of those, whose follies, instead of correcting and improving, he would seem to accept? In this troubled state of mind, he perceived the voice of God, saying: "Get thee away from thy father's house; go forth into the land which I shall show thee. I will make thee to be a great nation. I shall bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt become a blessing. Through thee (thy example and thy teaching) all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." Upon these encouraging words, Abram at once made ready to depart, and soon thereafter departed with his wife, Sarai, and his nephew, Lot, together with their servants and their herds, 2023-1026. At their arrival in the beautiful land of Canaan, Abram again heard the voice of God, saying: "This land I shall give unto thee and thy seed as a lasting inheritance;" and here Abram built an altar and thanked God.

MORAL LESSONS.—Reason is one of God's great blessings. Abram sought, found, and worshipped the true God, and taught his fellow-men to worship Him. Learn from Abram to know and to obey God.

IX. ABRAM'S PEACEFULNESS AND HEROISM.

Both Abram and Lot were owners of large herds of cattle and sheep. They had freely to move from place to place for more pasture, and therefore lived but in tents,

which could easily be pitched and removed. The food often being scarce, the herdsmen quarrelled about the best places to feed their cattle, and Abram said to Lot: "Let there be no quarreling between us and our herdsmen, for we are near relatives; let us rather part in peace. If thou wilt move to the left, then I shall go to the right, and if thou shouldst prefer the right side, then I shall go to the left." Lot looked about, chose the fertile plain of the Jordan, bade farewell to his uncle, and moved to Sodom. He lived there but a short time, when he became convinced that he had acted in a hasty manner, in having left a true and powerful friend; for hostile armies invaded the country and captured him, together with many others, and all their possessions. When Abram heard of his nephew's misfortune, he at once equipped three hundred and eighteen of his trained servants, and with the chieftains of his Amorite allies, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamreh, went in pursuit of the plundering band. He reached their camp, entered it by night, routed it completely, set free all the captives, and retook all the spoil.

On his way home, Abram was met and lauded by Malchizedek, king and priest of Salem, who offered him bread and wine, and praised God for His assistance, and Abram gave him the tithe of his booty. The king of Sodom also offered his greetings of praise and gratitude to Abram, and asked but for his men. And Abram replied: I will not keep of the spoil even as much as a thread or a shoelace for myself. My servants, and Aner, Eshcol, and Mamreh, however, may take their portion. Soon thereafter God appeared to Abram, promised him numerous descendants, and called his name Abraham,

father of many nations, and that of his wife, Sarah. And Abraham trusted His words and offered sacrifices.

MORAL LESSONS.—In this story we admire Abraham's liberality and his love of peace, as well as his true friendship, his heroism, and disinterestedness. Be not liberal at the expense of others.

X. ABRAHAM'S HOSPITALITY AND HUMANITY.

On a hot summer day, when Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent, he saw three strangers approaching him. He went to meet them, bowed, and said: "My lords, if I have found grace with you, do not pass my place, but rest yourselves under this tree, that I may fetch a morsel of bread for you to eat and some water to wash your feet." They replied: "Do as thou hast spoken." Abraham then gave orders for a bounteous meal, and when ready, he spread it before his guests and waited on them. "Where is thy wife, Sarah?" one of them now asked, and on learning that she was close by, in the tent, he said: "About this time next year, I shall come again, and then I hope God will have blessed you with a son." With thanks and blessings in their hearts and upon their lips the strangers departed, and Abraham accompanied them a short distance.

On his way homeward, Abraham perceived the voice of God, that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah would be destroyed on account of the wickedness of their inhabitants.

And with a heart full of pity he then prayed: O Lord, God, Thou just Judge, wilt Thou destroy the righteous

with the wicked? Perhaps there are fifty, or forty, or thirty, or twenty, or even but ten good men in the city, wouldst thou not spare the place for their sake?" And God said, "I will spare the city, if even but ten righteous men could be found therein." Abraham did not dare to continue to speak, and went his way.

MORAL LESSONS.—Children, learn from Abraham to be kind-hearted and hospitable, modest and polite, sympathizing and benevolent. How kind and merciful is God, who listens to prayers and petitions coming from a pure heart.

XI. THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH.

Two of the godly messengers who visited Abraham arrived toward evening at Sodom. Lot met them at the gate of the city, and kindly asked them to stop with him over night. After much pressure, they went with him and were liberally entertained at his hands. Before they lay down, the men of Sodom, young and old, from all parts of the city, surrounded the house, wildly shouting: "Where are the men who came to thee over night; bring them out unto us, that we may know them." And Lot went out, and said: "I pray you, brethren, act not so wickedly, do no harm to the men in my house." But they angrily cried: "Thou, a stranger thyself, wilt teach us what to do? We shall deal worse with thee than with them." They were just about laying violent hands on Lot, when the strangers cautiously took him in. They then made a rush toward the door, but could not find it, for they were instantly smitten with blindness.

The messengers, fully convinced of the wickedness of the people, then said to Lot: Prepare to leave this place, with thy whole family, at an early hour in the morning, for it is doomed to destruction. Lot lent ear to the kind warnings of the messengers, but his sons-in-law took them as a jest. At break of day, while yet hesitating, Lot, his wife and daughters were led forth from the city by the messengers, with the following instructions: "Escape for your lives; look ye not behind, stand not still; flee to the mountains." Upon Lot's special request, he was permitted to stop with his family in the small town of Zoar, close by. They had scarcely reached the place, when a fierce thunder-storm roused the wicked people in the cities from their sleep, and fire and brimstone fell from heaven and consumed Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their inhabitants. Lot's wife, having looked back, was turned into a pillar of salt. The entire surrounding country was changed into a salt sea, now known as the "Dead Sea." No creatures live in it, and no trace of vegetation is found near it, and anything kept in its waters for a time becomes covered with a salt crust.

MORAL LESSONS.—Wickedness and corruption lead to destruction. Lot imitated the virtues of his uncle Abraham, and was saved. God is just. Mind the orders of parents and teachers.

"For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."—Ps. xci. 2.

XII. ISHMAEL AND ISAAC.

Ishmael and Isaac were sons of Abraham. The mother of Ishmael was Hagar, and Sarah was the mother of

Isaac, the son of promise. Ishmael was a wild lad, who freely mocked his brother. His conduct displeased Sarah, and being afraid that Ishmael might not only be a bad example to her beloved son, but even become an equal heir with him, she said to Abraham: "Send away this bondwoman with her son, for he shall not be heir with my son." Abraham felt sorely grieved by this severe demand; but listening to the voice of God and trusting in His promise, that Ishmael too should become great, and probably also for the sake of preserving the family peace, he yielded. Early in the morning, he provided Hagar with bread and water and sent her off with her son. She went, and having wandered about in the wilderness for some time, found the water in the leather bottle used, and the boy unable to go farther, dying of thirst. She laid him under the shade of a tree, and as she sat down at some distance from him, she weepingly said: "I cannot look on when the lad is dying." But then a voice from above came to her ears: "What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not, for God has seen the agony of the lad. Help him up, he will recover." Looking about, she saw a well of water, and was thus relieved of her distress. Ishmael soon regained his strength and grew up under God's special care in the wilderness, and became renowned for his skill in the use of the bow, and the founder of twelve tribes, called the "Ishmaelites."

MORAL LESSONS.—Do not mock or tease one another, nor make light of the troubles of others. Such bad conduct often leads to sad results among children, and to ill feelings and trouble among families. It is proper that the older children in a family give, by their excellent behavior, a good example to their younger brothers and

sisters. In guarding against evil influences, let your motives be free from selfishness. In the hour of distress do not lose presence of mind. God's help is nearest, when danger is greatest. The conduct of Sarah, at this instance, appears harsh, heartless, and selfish; that of Hagar, despondent and lacking of presence of mind; while Abraham gloriously shines forth as the loving, kind-hearted father, the peace-guarding husband, and the obedient servant of God.

XIII. ABRAHAM'S OFFERING.

The severest of the many tests, by which Abraham proved his love and obedience to God, was his readiness to sacrifice, in honor of Him, the dearest in his possession, his beloved son Isaac, as the heathens did, in honor of their idols (Moloch). Thus, as he perceived the voice of God within his heart calling: "Abraham! Abraham! take thy only beloved son Isaac, and offer him to me as a burnt-offering," he answered: "Here am I." Early in the morning he made ready, and, accompanied by his servants and his son, he went his way slowly, silently and thoughtfully, until on the third day he reached the foot of Mt. Moriah. "Stay ye here with the asses," he said to his servants, "I and my son will go up the mountain and worship, and then return to you." On the way up Isaac asked: "My father! there is fire and wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" This simple question no doubt deeply moved the heart of the father, and he trustingly replied: "God will provide one, my son."

Having reached the mountain top, Abraham built an

altar, laid the wood upon it, bound his son Isaac, and took the knife in his trembling hand, and while hesitating for a moment, and probably still pondering at the idea, whether his God could require human sacrifices, at that very instant, just before offering his son, he heard the voice of an angel of God from above, calling: "Abraham! Abraham! Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou the least unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God, and hast not withheld thy only son from me. Uplifting his eyes in gratitude to his God, Abraham saw a ram, caught by the horns in a thicket, and he offered him instead of his son.

With renewed assurances of God's richest blessings, and with loftier ideas of the greatness and perfection of his God, Abraham returned with his beloved son.

MORAL LESSONS.—Children, learn from Abraham to *obey willingly and immediately*. "HERE AM I" be your prompt answer, when parents and teachers call on you.

Abraham, the hero of so many daring acts and noble virtues, stands before us an eternal witness of the truth, that God despises human sacrifices.

"Behold to obey is better than sacrifice."—1 Sam. xv.

22.

"And thou shalt love the Eternal, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

—Deut. vi. 5.

XIV. SARAH'S DEATH.

Sarah, the beloved wife of Abraham, died at Hebron, at the age of one hundred and twenty-seven years; and Abraham and his son Isaac deeply mourned their loss.

Abraham then went to the Hittites, in order to secure a respectable burial place. He said to them, "I am a stranger among you ; let me have a burial place to bury my dead." The Hittites kindly replied, "Thou art considered a godly prince among us ; any one of us will gladly give thee the choicest of his lands for a burial ground." Abraham bowed to the kind men, and said, "If this be so, pray to entreat, in my behalf, Ephron, the Hittite, that he may sell to me for that purpose the cave of Machpelah and the field surrounding it, which belongs to him."

Ephron thereupon said to Abraham : ' Not so, my Lord, but accept the field and the cave as a gift from my hands, and bury thy dead." Abraham again gratefully bowed, but did not wish to accept the valuable ground without paying its equivalent, and Ephron thereupon named four hundred shekels of silver as its proper value. Abraham consented and weighed the specified amount of silver unto Ephron, and took possession of the place as a family sepulchre. He then deposited the last remains of his beloved Sarah in the cave of Machpelah.

MORAL LESSONS.—The good-will of the Hittites, expressed in so touching a manner, must have considerably alleviated the sorrow of Abraham. Ever sympathize with those who are in trouble and distress. Learn from Abraham that it is proper to pay for what we need. It is pleasant to know that we are not under any obligations to others.

(Another lesson, though perhaps but distantly connected with this story, I venture to point out to you. "Live not on the charity of others, if you are able to help yourselves." "Study a given lesson and depend

not on your friends in school to help you. Rather write a poor composition of your own, than copy it from a book or a neighbor.”)

In comparing the characters of Abraham and Ephron, we find a remarkable contrast. The one promised little, only a morsel of bread to the strangers, and treated them to a bountiful repast; the other offered a whole field for nothing, and was pleased to accept its full value.

XV. ABRAHAM'S LAST DESIRE.

Abraham was old and blessed in prosperity, but it was his only and ardent desire to find a good and virtuous wife for his son Isaac. The Canaanites worshiped idols, and he feared that after his death his son might be led away by the daughter of an idolator. He therefore made his servant Eliezer promise him, by an oath, that he would go to his own kindred and try to find a wife for his son from his own family. The servant did swear, and at once took ten camels and some of the most precious treasures of his master, and set out toward the city of Nahor, and arriving there at dusk, he stopped by the side of a well, a short distance from the city. Just then the young damsels came out to draw water, and he thought it well to ask God's assistance, that he might possibly choose the kindest and most amiable of all. He therefore prayed: “O Eternal, God of my master Abraham, send me good speed, I pray Thee. Behold I stand by the well. Should now one of the maidens come here, and I say to her: ‘Let me drink,’ and she would answer: ‘Drink, my lord, and I will also draw water for thy camels,’ let her be the one whom Thou hast chosen for Thy servant Isaac.”

Eliezer had scarcely finished his prayer, when Rebekah came to the well with a pitcher upon her shoulder, which she quietly filled. Eliezer came forward and said: "Pray let me have a drink." "Drink my lord," she replied, while placing the pitcher into his hands, and when he had finished drinking, she continued: "I will also draw water for thy camels;" and she did so. The servant looked at her with silent surprise, and then giving her earrings and bracelets said: "Accept these for thy kindness, and tell me, whose daughter thou art, and whether I could stop in thy father's house over night." Rebekah answered: "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milka and Nahor, a brother of Abraham. We have room for thee to lodge, and plenty of straw and hay for thy camels." The girl hastened home, and the servant bowed down and thanked God. When Laban heard the story of his sister and saw her presents, he ran to the well, and greeting the stranger said: "Come thou, blessed of God, I have made place for thee and thy camels." Eliezer followed his host and was hospitably received by all in the house. When asked to eat, he said: "I cannot eat, until I have attended to my errand." He began by telling them of his master, of the object of his journey, and of God's kindness paving his way, and then asked: "Will you deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me, and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right or to the left." And Laban and Bethuel answered: "God has ordained this matter. Rebekah stands before thee, take her to become the wife of thy master's son." The servant uttered words of thanks and praise to God, and gave presents of gold and silver to Rebekah, to her mother, and to her brother. They then sat down to

feast, while pleasure and joy prevailed throughout the household.

Eliezer rose early the next morning, and asked leave to depart with Rebekah; but her mother and brother desired her to remain with them for some time. And Eliezer said: "Do not delay me in bringing the good news to my master, since God has prospered my errand." Rebekah, on being asked, consented to go, and after receiving the blessings of her mother and the good wishes of her relatives, she and her maidens departed with Eliezer.

MORAL LESSONS.—Idolatry is the root of all evil. Abraham was cautious to guard his son against its corrupting influences. Parents are to the last moments of their lives bound to secure the happiness of their children. Earthly treasures alone cannot accomplish it. The fear of God, piety, and benevolence, deeply rooted in our hearts, will make us happy. Love, honor, and obey your parents. If you are sent on a message, learn from Eliezer to attend to it readily and with intelligence. Ask God's assistance on every important undertaking.

"Better is unto me the law of thy mouth than thousands of gold and silver."—Ps. cxix. 72.

God guides those who trust in Him.

"Commit thy way unto the Eternal and trust in Him, and He will accomplish it."—Ps. xxxvii. 5.

Cultivate early in your life kindness of heart, amiability, and modesty.

XVI. ISAAC AND REBEKAH.

Eliezer's return was anxiously looked for in the house of Abraham. At last he arrived, and was met by Isaac in the field. When Rebekah saw him from a distance

and learned that he was Isaac, she alighted from her camel and threw her veil over her face. Yet a few minutes, and Isaac welcomed Rebekah, conducted her into the tent of his mother, and she became his beloved wife (2088-1861). Abraham enjoyed yet the happiness of the married couple for thirty-five years, and then he was gathered to his people, old and satisfied, at the age of one hundred and seventy-five years, and his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried him in the cave of Machpelah (2123-1826).

Isaac and Rebekah followed in the footsteps of their departed parents, and God was with them in all their doings. A famine in the land forced them to move to Gerar, a city of the Philistines. Its inhabitants envied Isaac on account of his great wealth, and repeatedly stopped up the wells which his servants had dug. Isaac's peaceable disposition finally conquered the ill feelings of this people, and they made a treaty of peace with him. At Beer-Sheba God appeared to Isaac, saying: "I am the God of Abraham, fear not, I am with thee, and will bless and multiply thy seed." Isaac built an altar and called upon God.

MORAL LESSONS.—The life of Abraham and his virtuous qualities remain a rich legacy, a lasting monument for useful study and practice. As his descendants, we are properly enjoined: "Look up to the rock of which you are hewn."

XVII. ESAU AND JACOB.

Esau and Jacob were twin brothers, sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Esau, the first-born, was hairy, rough, and

careless, and took to hunting and farming; Jacob's body was smooth; he was of a mild disposition, and dwelt in tents like the shepherds. The father was pleased with the courageous Esau, and liked to eat of his venison; the mother was more attached to the quiet Jacob.

One day, Esau came home from the field tired and fatigued. Jacob had just prepared some pottage. Esau said to him, "Give me some of that red stuff" (Edom). Jacob answered, "Sell me thy birthright, and thou shalt have some." (The possession of the birthright entitled the holder to be the heir of all his father's riches.) Esau carelessly said: "I may die any day, what good would then the birthright be to me?" So Esau gave it up, and received in return the pottage. Some time later, the aged and almost blind father ordered Esau to hunt some venison and prepare it to his taste, whereupon he would bless him. Rebekah overheard these words; and repeating them to Jacob, she added: "Get me two tender kids from the flock; I will prepare them like venison, and thou shalt bring them to thy father and ask for his blessing." Jacob, fearing detection, replied: "Esau is hairy, and I am smooth; if my father should feel me, I would stand a deceiver before him, and instead of blessing me, he might curse me." Rebekah feared no danger, and persisted in her order; and Jacob obeyed. When all was ready, she dressed him in Esau's best garments, wrapped the skins of the kids around his neck and hands, and giving him the savory dish, sent him in to his father. And Jacob said: "Eat, my father, of thy son's venison and bless me." "Who art thou, my son," said Isaac, "and how didst thou find it so soon?" "I am Esau thy first born," said Jacob, "God brought it before me." Isaac then said, "Come here, my son, that I may feel

thee." While doing so, he said: "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau. He then ate and blessed him.

Jacob was shortly gone, when Esau came with his venison. Isaac trembled on hearing the accustomed voice, and said: "Who was he that brought me venison and received my blessing?" Esau wept and angrily cried: "Is his name called Jacob, deceiver, because he has twice deceived me? He has taken my birthright, and now my blessing, too." Esau left his father's presence with a heart full of hatred toward his brother, and determined to slay him as soon as his father should have passed away.

Rebekah foresaw that danger, and advised Jacob thereof, saying: "Arise, and flee to Laban, my brother, at Haran, and stay with him until the wrath of thy brother turn away, and he will have forgotten thy wrongdoing. Why should I be bereaved of both of you on one day?" She then succeeded in convincing her husband of the importance of Jacob's immediate departure, and he, too, urged him to go.

MORAL LESSONS.—In this story, we are warned against gluttony, carelessness, meanness, greed, deceit, and vengeance. Ill-gotten goods bring trouble and sorrow.

XVIII. JACOB'S JOURNEY.

Jacob bade farewell to father and mother, received their blessings, and left Beer-Sheba to go to Haran. His feelings must have been very sad; the anxiety of his mother and the wrongs committed against his brother and father certainly engaged his mind, and filled him

with sorrow and remorse. "I have grossly sinned," he might have said to himself, "but I shall make amends; I will try to be a man worthy of my father and grandfather, Isaac and Abraham. Honesty and faithfulness shall henceforth guide my steps, truth be my shield, and God my trust and my hope." Such lofty resolutions, coming from his innermost heart, surely must have afforded new strength to the weary wanderer and changed the dreary desert into a pleasing garden. The sun began setting, and he feared not laying down in the open field, a stone as a pillow under his head, and he soon fell asleep.

In this sleep he had a sublime vision. He dreamt seeing a ladder standing upon the earth reaching up to heaven, and angels of God went up and down thereon. God, on the top of the ladder, said to him: "I am the Eternal, the God of Abraham and Isaac. I will give to thee and thy seed this land, and bless thee, and through thee all the families of the earth shall be blessed. And thee I will guard in all thy ways, and bring thee back again into this land and leave thee not until I have done that of which I have spoken to thee."

When Jacob awoke, he exclaimed: Truly, God is in this place, and I did not know it. What a sacred place this is. It is the house of God and the gate of heaven."

He arose early, set up the stone from under his head as a monument, poured oil on it as a sign of gratitude, and called this place "Beth El," house of God. He then made the following vow: "If God will be with me, and guard me on my way, and will give me bread and raiment, and I come again in peace to my father's house, then shall the Eternal be my God, and this stone become

a house of God. And of all that Thou wilt give me, I shall surely return the tithe unto Thee."

MORAL LESSONS.—God receives with favor those who truly repent. He guards and strengthens those who trust in Him. He is truthful. Be modest in your wishes. Remember the poor and needy.

XIX. JACOB WITH LABAN.

Jacob continued his journey toward Haran with renewed courage and a joyous heart. Near the city he met some shepherds with their flocks around a well, which was covered with a large stone, to keep the water clean. Jacob greeted them kindly, and said, "My brethren, whence do you come?" "We are from Haran," was the answer. He continued: "Do you know Laban, the son of Nahor?" "We know him well," they replied, "and behold! there comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep." As soon as Rachel came nigh, Jacob removed the heavy stone, watered her flock, and told her, with tears of joy in his eyes, that he was the son of Rebekah, her father's sister. Rachel, overwhelmed with surprise, left her cousin, ran home, and related the pleasant news to her father. Laban hurried to the well, welcomed his nephew, and took him to his house. Jacob seemed to feel quite contented at his uncle's, and made himself as useful as he could. Laban said to him: "Shouldst thou work for me for nothing, because thou art my relative? Tell me, what shall thy wages be?" Jacob replied: "I shall serve thee seven years, if thou wilt give me Rachel as a wife." Laban agreed to this, and Jacob went to work diligently and cheerfully. At

the end of that period, Laban invited a large number of guests to the wedding feast, and on that solemn occasion he deceived Jacob by giving him his elder daughter Leah instead of Rachel. After the ceremony, when the bride removed her vail, Jacob perceived the deception, and said to Laban: "Did I not serve thee for Rachel, why hast thou deceived me?" Laban answered: "It is not customary to marry the younger daughter before the elder; be therefore contented. At the close of this festive week thou shalt have Rachel, also, for another service of seven years." Jacob consented, and Rachel also became his wife.

MORAL LESSONS.—Sudden joy gives nerve and strength for the moment. Surprise makes often awkward. Be moderate in your joy; retain presence of mind when surprised. Beware of deceit. Keep your promise.

"That which goeth forth from thy lips thou shalt heed and do."—Deut. xxiii. 24.

XX. JACOB'S DEPARTURE FROM LABAN.

When Jacob's second term of service was up, and he had become the father of eleven sons and one daughter, he said to Laban, "Let me return to my own country, for now I have to work for my own family." Laban replied: "I know that God has blessed me for thy sake; if thou wouldst remain with me, I should be willing to give thee such wages as thou wouldst ask." Jacob consented, and asked for all the speckled and spotted sheep and goats which were to be born from that date. Jacob worked for Laban six years more, and during that time grew a very rich man. He became the owner of large

herds of cattle, notwithstanding that Laban made frequent changes in the contract between them. Jacob's increasing wealth filled Laban and his sons with envy. They had scarcely a pleasant look or a kind word for the hard-working Jacob, but, on the contrary, heaped scorn and reproaches upon him. Such treatment of jealous relatives for faithful services made his hard task unendurable. Then God said to Jacob in a dream, "Return unto the land of thy fathers, and I will be with thee." Jacob spoke to his wives of his sufferings and of his dream, and, as they also encouraged him to leave, he made secret preparations for an early departure. Soon afterwards Laban went to shear his sheep, and Jacob availed himself of the favorable opportunity and left with his entire household. After three days had elapsed, Laban heard of Jacob's departure, and at once set out in pursuit of him. God warned Laban in a dream at night, saying: "Take heed that thou speakest not with Jacob but good." On the seventh day he overtook him at the mountain of Gilead, and he said to him: "Why didst thou flee secretly, thus preventing me from kissing my children and bidding you all farewell? And should an ardent longing after thy father's house have been the cause of thy foolish secrecy, why didst thou steal my gods?" Jacob, as yet unaware that Rachel had taken her father's images, answered: "As to the first, I was afraid that thou wouldst take thy daughters from me by force; and as to the second, make close search throughout my camp, and take anything which belongs to thee." Laban did so, without finding the least thing belonging to him. (Rachel had hidden her father's images under the saddle of the camel on which she was riding.) Jacob then said to Laban: "Why didst thou accuse me

of stealing? What hast thou found that belongs to thee? Put it up that our men may judge between us. I have served thee honestly and faithfully for twenty years; my labor was trying and exhausting. Heat by day and frost at night almost consumed me. I did pay for any loss to thy flocks. Wherein then have I done wrong?" Laban answered: "The daughters are mine, the children are mine, the flocks are mine too, and all that thou seest belongs to me; but what can I do since God has warned me from harming thee? Let us therefore make a covenant, that in future friendship and peace shall exist between us." This being agreed to, they erected some stones as a memorial of the covenant, took leave of each other and departed.

MORAL LESSONS.—The honest and faithful performance of our duties is a source of great comfort and satisfaction. Beware of dishonesty. Deceive not. A good conscience is a soft pillow. God is nigh when troubles surround us.

"Behold He sleepeth not and slumbereth not, the guardian of Israel."

XXI. JACOB'S ANXIETY AND HIS PREPARATIONS BEFORE MEETING HIS BROTHER ESAU.

Jacob moved onward and approached the river Jordan. He was soon to meet his brother Esau, and the deceit practiced on him twenty years ago stood vividly present in his mind, and filled his breast with fear. He sent messengers before him to inform his brother of his coming and to pacify him. On their return, they reported

that they had seen Esau, and that he was approaching with four hundred men. Jacob, excited and afraid at this news, separated his camp into two divisions, so that, if Esau should attack one of them, the other might possibly escape. He then prayed to God: "O Eternal, God of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, Thou who didst say unto me, 'Return to thy father's house, and I will deal well with thee,' I am not worthy of all the kindness which Thou hast shown to Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over the Jordan, and now I have become two camps. Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, lest he might come and smite me, the mother with the children." Jacob then selected five hundred and fifty head of cattle as a present for his brother. He arranged them in several droves, placed each in charge of one of the servants and gave them these instructions: "Pass on before me; keep at a proper distance from each other, and on meeting my brother, tell him: 'This is a present from my master Jacob to his brother Esau.'" All these preparations being made, Jacob remained at that place overnight.

MORAL LESSONS.—The feelings of satisfaction and happiness we enjoy, when we have done right, and those of sorrow and fear which we suffer, when we have done wrong, are utterances of our conscience—that divine monitor within us. Ever listen to its voice, and heed its silent warnings when about to do wrong. Neither time nor riches can silence it, if you are at fault. It is wise and proper to take timely precautions, and especially so when danger threatens. Never lose presence of mind. A sincere prayer in time of trouble affords great relief,

inspires us with hope, and gives us new strength. Make amends for a wrong committed, if it is in your power to do so, and then you will be forgiven by man and by God.

“When a man has sinned and is conscious of his guilt, then he shall restore what he has taken violently away, or the wages which he has withheld, or that which was delivered to him to keep, or the lost thing which he has found.”—Lev. v. 23.

XXII. JACOB'S MEETING WITH ESAU.

When the sun rose the next morning, Jacob saw his brother Esau approaching, and he bowed seven times as Esau drew near. Esau ran toward his brother, embraced him, and they both wept tears of joy. Esau beheld with surprise the women and children as they came bowing before him, and said: “Who are all these with thee?” Jacob said: “These are my wives and children, whom God has graciously given me; and these flocks are a present for thee, my brother, which, I pray, thou wilt accept from my hands.” Esau said: “I have enough, my brother. keep thy own.” But Jacob said: “If I have found grace in thine eyes, then thou wilt accept these of God's blessing, which I now offer to thee.” Esau consented, and offered in return any assistance, which he or his men could render him. And Jacob replied: “Thou knowest well, my brother, how delicate and tender the women and children are, and how much care the flocks require. Let them, therefore, move slowly, while thou and thy men pass on before me.” Esau thereupon returned to Seir, and Jacob moved,

encouraged through a divine vision, toward Beth-El. Mindful of a former appearance of God at that place, at the time he had left his home, he urged his family to give up any idols which they might possess, so that they might enter Beth-El with clean hands and pure hearts. His words were obeyed. Arrived at Beth-El, God appeared to him again, and said to him : "Jacob, thy name shall henceforth be Israel (champion of God), and thy children shall inherit the land which I have promised to Abraham and Isaac." Full of gratitude, Jacob built an altar, and offered sacrifices to God, who had delivered him from so many troubles. On the way toward Hebron, God blessed him with another son, whom he called Benjamin. Great as his joy must have been, it was utterly counterbalanced by the deep sorrow, which the sudden death of his beloved wife Rachel caused him. He buried her by the road-side, and erected at the spot a monument sacred to her memory. At last, he arrived at Hebron, and enjoyed the pleasure of meeting again with his aged father Isaac. Twenty years later, Isaac died, one hundred and eighty years old. Esau and Jacob buried him in the cave of Machpelah (2228-1721).

MORAL LESSONS.—In this story, dear children, we find a great change for the better in the characters of Esau and Jacob. Esau's heart was now again filled with affection and brotherly love, and that of Jacob was entirely free from selfishness and deceit. Forget and forgive the wrongs of others to you, and do not delay to ask forgiveness and to make amends, if you were the offending parties. Be ever desirous and active to improve yourselves.

“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart.”—*Lev. x. 17.*

“He that concealeth his transgressions will not prosper; but who confesseth and forsaketh them will obtain mercy.”—*Prov. xxviii. 13.*

XXIII. JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS.

Jacob had twelve sons : Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Isachar, Zebulon, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, and Benjamin; and one daughter, Dinah. He loved Joseph best, on account of his excellent conduct, and he made him a coat of many colors. This sign of favor made his brothers jealous, and they hated him. Their anger and hatred were increased, when, one morning, he told them the following dream which he had: “I dreamt,” said he, “we were binding sheaves in the field. My sheaf rose; and yours surrounded it and bowed to it.” His brethren then said to him : “Shalt thou indeed reign over us; or shalt thou have dominion over us?” And they hated him still more. He soon had another dream, which he likewise told his brethren in the presence of his father. “Hear,” said he, “I have had another dream. This time I saw the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowing to me.” His father rebuked him, saying: “What does thy dream mean? Shall I, thy mother, and thy eleven brothers bow down to thee?” His brothers envied him, but his father pondered over the matter.

MORAL LESSONS.—Learn, dear children, from this story to be good and to please your parents, who love you all

alike, even if they sometimes reward the best one. Beware of envy, for it leads to sin and crime.

XXIV. JOSEPH IN THE PIT.

The brothers of Joseph had gone for some time to pasture their father's flocks near Shechem. Jacob sent Joseph to look after them and let him know, and he willingly went. A man met him near Shechem in search of something, and asked him, "What seekest thou?" "I am looking for my brothers," answered Joseph. The stranger told him that they had left for Dotham, and Joseph went in that direction. As soon as he came in sight of them, they said: "Behold, the dreamer is coming! Let us kill him, and throw him into one of the pits and say, a wild beast has devoured him." But Reuben said: "Do not shed blood, cast him rather into one of the pits in the wilderness." It was his intention to save him out of their hands and return him to his father. The brothers assented, and when Joseph came near they took off his beautiful coat, and threw him into a pit. Unmoved by his cries and implorings, they left the poor brother to himself, and sat down to eat. Reuben could not eat, his mind was bent to save his brother, and so he went off. In his absence a company of Ishmaelitic merchants came by the road, carrying spices to Egypt. And Judah said: "What good is it to slay our brother? Let us rather sell him to these merchants, and our hands will not be stained by our brother's blood. They all agreed, and Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver. His pitiful entreaties and tears had no effect upon his cruel brothers, nor upon the heartless mer-

chants. When Reuben came to the pit and found it empty, he ran in terror to his brothers and cried: "The lad is not there, and whither shall I now go?" But they killed a kid, and dipped Joseph's coat in its blood, and sent it home to their father, with this deceitful message: "This coat we have found; see whether it is the coat of thy son or not." Jacob recognized it at once and cried: "It is the coat of my son! A wild beast has devoured him." And he rent his clothes and mourned for his son many days.

MORAL LESSONS.—This sad story should fill us with compassion and pity for those parents who are so unfortunate as to have wicked children; and also for those children who are debased enough to bring trouble and sorrow on their parents. Let us be warned from committing the first sin, for one sin leads to another. The envy of Joseph's brothers led them to hatred, their hatred almost to murder, and actually to the sale of their brother. To conceal this crime, they practised deceit and falsehood, and, worse than all, they heaped sorrow and grief upon the head of their father.

XXV. JOSEPH IN EGYPT.

The Ishmaelites took Joseph down to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, who was the captain of Pharaoh's body-guard. Joseph served his master faithfully, and in return enjoyed his fullest confidence. He trusted in God, and God was with him. All he undertook succeeded. But his faithfulness and innocence were to stand a severe test. Potiphar's wife tried to tempt Joseph to do wrong, and when he persistently refused, she made a false accusation

against him, and her husband sent him to prison. But even the prison did not appear as gloomy to Joseph as it did to his fellow-prisoners, for he felt happy in the consciousness of his innocence. The keeper of the prison noticed soon the difference between Joseph and those usually committed to his care, and Joseph found favor in his sight, and was appointed overseer in the prison.

MORAL LESSONS.—God never forsakes those who trust in Him. If we are falsely accused, it is a consolation that God is aware of our innocence. A man's countenance generally is an indication of his character. Do not listen to the voice of temptation.

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."—Prov. i. 10.

"Enter not in the path of the wicked, and step not in the way of the bad."—Prov. iv. 14.

XXVI. JOSEPH IN PRISON.

Joseph attended to the duties of his new position with care and diligence. His chief aim was to increase the comfort and improve the morals of the prisoners, and his gentle manners and winning ways helped him greatly, and made him a favorite with all. After a short time, the king's chief butler and chief baker were committed to his charge as prisoners. One morning, while making his usual rounds through the prison, he found them looking sad and dejected. He asked them the cause, and they told him that they each had a dream the previous night, but nobody could interpret it. Joseph said: "The interpretation belongs to God, but let me hear your dreams." The chief butler began: "In my dream I saw before me

a vine with three branches; it budded, blossomed, and the cluster of grapes ripened. I pressed them into a cup which I held in my hand and offered it to the king."

Joseph replied: "The three branches mean three days. Within three days the king will restore thee to thy former place, and thou wilt be permitted to reach the cup to the king as before. Think of me, then, in thy prosperity, and kindly use thy best efforts to obtain my release, for I was forcibly taken from my home in Canaan, and, although innocent, was cast into prison."

The chief baker, highly pleased with Joseph's interpretation, related his dream: "I had three baskets on my head. The uppermost contained fine bread for the king himself, but the birds ate it up." And Joseph said: "The three baskets mean three days. After three days thou wilt be hanged by order of the king, and the birds will eat of thy flesh."

As Joseph had predicted, so it happened. On the third day the king's birthday was celebrated. He gave a grand feast to all his servants, and recalled the chief butler to wait on him, but ordered the chief baker to be hanged. But the chief butler, in his prosperity, forgot Joseph.

MORAL LESSONS.—Faithfulness insures confidence. Be faithful and true in whatever position you may be placed. In times of prosperity do not forget your friends who are in adversity.

XXVII. JOSEPH BEFORE PHARAOH.

Two years later Pharaoh, the king, had two dreams in succession which greatly troubled his mind. All the wise

men of Egypt were summoned, but none of them could give a satisfactory explanation. The chief butler then came forward and told the king about his dream in prison, and how a Hebrew lad, named Joseph, had interpreted it. Joseph was sent for and appeared before the king. His modest demeanor pleased the king, and he said: "I am told that thou understandest how to interpret dreams." Joseph answered: "Not I, God alone may give an answer pleasing to the king and useful to him." The king then related his dream: "In my dream I was standing at the brink of the river, and I saw seven fat and well-shaped cows come out of the river and feed in the meadow, and close after them came seven lean, wretched-looking cows, and devoured the former without looking any better therefor. I awoke, but soon fell asleep again. And now I saw seven full ears of corn growing out of one stalk, and then seven empty ones sprang up, and the empty ones devoured the full ones." And Joseph said: "Both dreams of the king have but one meaning. God has shown Pharaoh in a vision what He intends to do. The seven fat cows and the seven full ears mean seven years of plenty, which will soon come, and the seven lean cows and the seven empty ears mean seven years of famine which will succeed them, and the scarcity will be so great that there will be no sign left of the previous years of plenty. The repetition of the dream signifies that God will at once carry out His resolves. Let the king look out a man discreet and wise, who will gather stores of corn during the years of plenty, that suffering and starvation may be averted when the years of famine set in." These words pleased the king, and he said: "Can there be found another man as full of the spirit of God? Since God has made known to

thee all this, there is none so wise as thou art. I shall appoint thee over my house, and by thy word shall my people be governed, and only in the throne will I be greater than thou." And Pharaoh took off his ring, and put it on Joseph's hand, and made him ride through the city in his chariot, arrayed in white linen and a golden chain around his neck, and they cried out before him, "Bend the knee." Pharaoh named him Zaphenath-Pa'neäch, and gave him Assenoth, a daughter of the priest Poti-pherá, as a wife. And God blessed him with two sons: the first-born he called Manasseh, for he said: "God has made me forget all my trouble," and the second he called Ephraim, because, said he, "God has caused me to become fruitful in the land of my affliction." Joseph was then only thirty years old.

MORAL LESSONS.—God guides the ways of man. Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave in order to frustrate his dreams. Potiphar's wife had him sent to prison; but these persecutions were only the means which led to his triumph.

XXVIII. JOSEPH'S ACTIVITY AS A RULER.

Joseph went through all Egypt and gave orders to store up in granaries all the food that could be spared. Under his directions the storehouses were filled to overflowing. Thus, like a prudent manager, he prepared in the time of plenty for the coming time of want. After the seven years of plenty, the years of famine were setting in, and the cry for bread was loud and general. Through Joseph's wise management Egypt

was saved from starving ; for he opened the well-filled storehouses and sold corn to the people. The effect of the scarcity was also keenly felt in the neighboring countries, and they too looked to Egypt for relief. Among those who came to buy food were also Joseph's own brothers from Canaan. Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him, and he remembered the dreams of his youth. As they bowed to him he said : "Whence come ye?" and they answered : "We come from the land of Canaan to buy corn." Then Joseph replied : "It is not so. Ye are spies, ye have come to learn the weak points of the land." "Pardon us, our lord," said they, "thy servants are no spies. We are honest men, twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is with our father." Scarcely listening to their story, Joseph repeated his accusation and sent them into ward. After three days he said to them : "I am God-fearing, and shall deal justly with you. Let one of you remain here, and the rest may go and bring the corn to your father; on your return take with you your youngest brother that your words may be trusted." On hearing this they said to each other : "Truly, we are guilty of cruel conduct toward our brother Joseph; his agony and his tears did not move us, therefore we meet with such treatment."

And Ruben added : "Did I not say, 'do not sin against the child,' but you would not listen." They did not know that Joseph could understand them, for he spoke to them through an interpreter. At this expression of sorrow, Joseph withdrew for a moment and wept. He soon returned, however, and ordered that Simeon be bound in their presence and led to prison. And to his steward he said : "Fill the sacks of these men with corn

and put the money of each one on top of it." This being done, they loaded their sacks upon their asses and departed. On their way homeward, one of them opened his sack, and to his terror found his money therein. The others, finding their money likewise placed on top of their corn, were seized with fear and said: "What is this that God has done unto us?" On their arrival at home, they related to their father all that had befallen them, and he said: "Ye have bereaved me, children; Joseph is no more, Simeon is in prison, and now Benjamin is asked for; this is too much for me to bear. My son Benjamin shall not go to Egypt."

MORAL LESSONS.—Save in time of prosperity for the hour of need. Do not waste your time in idleness, but lay up early a store of useful knowledge. Do not complain of bad luck; God sends the years of plenty first. Remember the poor and needy.

As we sow, so we reap. Sufferings are the great correctives of evil doers.

Repent an evil deed at once and wait not until trouble compels you to confess.

"Say ye to the righteous that he has done well; for the fruits of their doings shall they eat. Woe unto the wicked, the recompense of his hands shall be bestowed on him.—Isa. iii. 10-11.

XXIX. THE SECOND JOURNEY OF THE BROTHERS.

When the corn in Jacob's house was nearly used up, he said to his sons: "Go down to Egypt and buy some more

corn ;” but Judah replied : “ The ruler of Egypt warned us not to come before him, unless our youngest brother be with us. Let him come, then, and I will take care of him.” And Jacob said : “ If it must be so, be it so. Take him with you, and also double the amount of money, for that found in your sacks might have come there by mistake, and take, moreover, some of the choicest spices and fruits along as a present for the man, and may God let you find mercy with him, that he may send you back to me together with your imprisoned brother, and my son Benjamin. And if I am to be bereaved, let me be bereaved.”

The sons followed the advice of their father and left. At their arrival in Egypt, Joseph ordered that they be invited to dine with him at noon. At this they looked with fear and suspicion, and they spoke to the steward about the money which they found in their sacks. “ Peace unto you,” said he ; “ fear not ; God has secretly put a treasure in your possession.” He then brought Simeon in and told them to await the presence of the governor. When Joseph entered, they fell on their knees and held their presents out to him. He greeted them kindly, and said : “ Is your father well ?” and they answered, “ Thy servant, our father, is well.”

Looking at his brother Benjamin, he said : “ Is this your youngest brother, of whom you have spoken ? God be gracious unto thee, my son.” Having said this, he hurried into an adjoining room and wept tears of joy. On his re-entering, dinner was served, and they were seated according to their respective ages, at which they were greatly surprised. By order of Joseph, the steward paid special attention to Benjamin, and he received five times the portion of the others. This was done to excite

their envy, if there was any, but there was no sign of it. They all felt happy, and enjoyed their meal with merriment.

XXX. THE BROTHERS' LAST TRIAL.

Joseph knew well that his brothers had improved, yet he thought it well to put them to another test, in order to become thoroughly convinced that there might not be the least animosity against Benjamin, the youngest and most beloved son of the father. He therefore commanded his steward to fill the sacks of these men with corn, put each one's money on top of it, and in the sack of the youngest, his own silver cup. This being done, they left Egypt. They had not gone very far, when they were overtaken by a messenger of the king, who said to them : "Why do you repay evil for good? The cup which you have taken is the cup of my lord." But they answered : "Why dost thou speak to us in that manner? The money which we found in our sacks, we brought back from Canaan; how, then, should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? Let him die with whom the cup is found, and we will also be servants to my lord. They then opened their sacks in haste, and the cup was found in the sack of Benjamin; and in wild terror they rent their garments and returned to the city.

MORAL LESSONS.—A pure conscience is a source of courage at all times.

XXXI. JOSEPH MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN.

The brothers re-appeared and fell down before Joseph sorrowful and deeply afflicted. He then said to them: "What have you done?" And Judah replied: "What shall we say unto my lord? How shall we justify ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of thy servants; behold, we all are thy servants." But Joseph said: "God forbid that I should do this; the man in whose sack the cup was found, he shall be my servant, and as for you, go you in peace unto your father."

Then Judah went forward and said: "Pardon, my lord, let thy servant speak another word. Our father's life is bound up in that of Benjamin. When we went home from our first journey, we repeated to our father thy earnest words, and he said: 'My son Benjamin, the only one left from my beloved wife Rachel, shall not go down to Egypt, for, if an accident should befall him, it would bring my gray hair in sorrow to the grave.' Upon my pressing request, our father consented to let him go, when there was scarcely any more bread in the house. I promised him to return the boy safely. Keep me then here a slave in his place. How could I look in my father's face, unless the lad be with us? I could not bear to witness the evil which would befall him."

Joseph listened to this impressive appeal with deep emotion. He was now satisfied that his brothers were entirely free from envy and enmity, and that their love toward their father and Benjamin was true and sincere. He could not restrain himself any longer, but ordered to be left alone with these men. And when he was with

them alone, he burst into tears, and said : " I am Joseph, your brother ; is my father still alive ? " But they, struck with mingled feelings of surprise and fear, could find no words to answer him, and he continued : " Come near unto me and be not afraid. God has sent me here to save the lives of many." He fell upon the neck of his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. He then kissed all his brothers, and joy filled every heart. " Make haste," said he, " and go up to our father and tell him of all my glory; and bring him down with you to live with me." The news about Joseph's brothers was received in Pharaoh's house with pleasure and rejoicing. Pharaoh said to Joseph : " Send thy brothers home to bring thy father and his entire household down to us, that they may enjoy the best of the land." Joseph, by order of the king, sent wagons and presents for the father and plenty of food for the family. On their departure, he said : " Do not quarrel on the road." The brothers hastened homeward, and on meeting their aged father, they exclaimed : " Thy son Joseph is alive, and he is ruler over Egypt." Jacob hardly dared to believe them. But when he saw the presents and the wagons, his spirit revived, and he exclaimed in trembling tones. " It is enough. My son Joseph is still alive. I shall go and see him before I die."

MORAL LESSONS.—It is proper to speak for the innocent, it is virtuous to forbear and to forgive; and from Joseph we may learn how to pardon injuries received, and how to honor and assist parents and friends.

XXXII. JACOB'S JOURNEY TO EGYPT.

Jacob with his entire household left Canaan to go to Egypt. At Beer-Sheba he offered sacrifices to God and remembered His promises. And he perceived the voice of God in a vision saying: "I am the God of thy fathers, fear not to go to Egypt, for I will make thee there a great nation." Strengthened and encouraged by this renewed favor of God, Jacob moved onward, sending Judah in advance, to inform Joseph of his early arrival. Joseph thereupon set out to meet his father. As soon as he came in sight, he ran toward him, greeted and embraced him and wept. And Jacob said: "Now I am willing to die, since the grace of God has permitted me to see thy face." After their arrival in the capital—Memphis—Joseph introduced his father and some of his brothers to the king. The king was pleased to see the father of so good and wise a son, and asked him: "How old art thou?" Jacob replied: "I am one hundred and thirty years old. Few and evil have been the days of my life, and have not attained unto the days of the life of my fathers." He then blessed the king and retired. Joseph assigned to his father and to his brothers possessions in the land of Goshen and provided for all their wants.

MORAL LESSONS.—From Jacob we learn not to forget God in the days of our prosperity, but to thank Him and remember His kindness. In Joseph we have an example of a truly good son. In his high station he did not forget the filial duties of love, honor, and respect towards his father. He was not too proud to be seen by the side

of his aged father, although he knew that the Egyptians despised herdsmen.

XXXIII. JACOB'S AND JOSEPH'S DEATH.

Jacob lived yet seventeen years in Egypt. He was now one hundred and forty-seven years old and felt sickly and feeble. Joseph with his two sons hastened to the bedside of his father, who raising himself said: "I had not hoped to see thy face, and, lo, God hath shown me also thy children." He laid his hands upon their heads and blessed them, saying: "The God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk; the God, who fed me from my first being unto this day; the angel, who redeemed me from all evil, may He bless the lads, and let my name be called on them and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." After this he added: "Let it be proverbial in Israel to say in blessing their children: God make thee like Ephraim and Menasseh."

Jacob then assembled all his sons and blessed them in turn, and charged them to bury him in the cave of Machpelah with his fathers. Having thus uttered his heart's last desire, he closed his eyes in peace, deeply mourned by his sons and the Egyptians (2255-1694). Joseph had his father's body embalmed, and after forty days the funeral ceremonies took place. A very large procession of chariots and horsemen followed his last remains, so that the Canaanites, on witnessing the ceremonies, said: "This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians."

The brothers of Joseph, fearing that he now might avenge their former evil doings, went before him, saying:

"Thy father commanded before his death, saying: 'Thus shall ye say unto Joseph, O forgive, I pray thee, the trespass of thy brothers and their sins, for evil have they done unto thee.' Forgive, therefore, we pray thee, our trespass." Joseph wept when they thus spoke to him, and comforting them said: "Fear not; am I in the place of God? You have thought evil against me, God meant it unto good to save alive numerous people. Fear not, I shall support you and your families." Joseph reached an age of one hundred and ten years. Before his death he said to his brothers: "God will surely remember you and bring you into the land which He has promised unto our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; pray, take then my bones with you from here." The brothers solemnly promised to do so, and the pious soul of Joseph departed (2309-1640).

MORAL LESSONS.—The interesting and instructive record of Joseph must impress us with the truth, that God is the guardian and the shield of those who trust in Him. Joseph loved, honored, and obeyed his father from boyhood to the last; he stood his dreadful sufferings with resignation, and he had no ill words on his lips nor angry feelings in his heart for those who dealt wickedly with him. He was a faithful servant and rejected temptation, saying: "How should I do evil and sin against my God?" He was sympathizing with the suffering and tried to improve their morals and their condition; he was modest, saying: "It is not in me, God will answer for the peace of Pharaoh;" he was free from vengeance, saying: "Am I in the place of God?" Children, ever try to imitate the good and noble conduct of Joseph.

BIBLICAL HISTORY.

PART II.

I THE HARDSHIPS OF THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT.

The children of Jacob, including Joseph and his sons, who at the time of entering Egypt numbered seventy persons, increased there to nearly two millions. They were called, after Jacob's second name, the *Israelites* or *children of Israel*. A new king had ascended the throne, who did not remember the great services which Joseph had rendered the country. The prosperity of the numerous people residing in the land of Goshen excited his jealousy and roused his suspicion. He feared that they might join the armies of the enemy, should a foreign nation make war against Egypt. He, therefore, consulted his people, and upon their advice the Israelites had to do the hardest work in the field, make mortar and bricks, and build towns and store-houses, under the charge of the most cruel task-masters. By these means, it was thought, their strength could be best reduced, and their number lessened. Such severe treatment, however, had the opposite effect with the hard-worked people; for it not only made them stronger and better fit for later contests, but made them detest their cruel oppressors and their idolatrous practices, and remember the God of their fathers, with whom alone there is help.

Pharaoh therefore devised other still more cruel means for their extirpation. He charged the Hebrew nurses to kill each male child of the Israelites at its birth ; and when this plan failed, he commanded all his people to cast each new-born boy of the Hebrews into the river. It so happened that, about this time, an Israelitish male child was born, which, through the assistance of God, was saved to become in after-years the deliverer and redeemer of his people. The name of this child was Moses. 2368-1581.

MORAL LESSONS.—This story, dear children, shows how man devoid of faith and trust in God becomes degraded and brutish in thought and deed, and how all his wicked plans come to naught.

“Many thoughts are in the heart of man, but the counsel of the Eternal only is prevailing.”

“The Eternal frustrates the counsel of nations, and brings to naught the thoughts of people.—Ps. xxxiii. 10.

II. MOSES.

The parents of Moses were Amram and Jochebed, of the tribe of Levi. The mother succeeded in hiding him for three months. Fearing for his further safety, she took a little basket of bulrushes, made it watertight, laid the child in it, and placed it among the reeds. Surely, she thought, God will send some one who will take pity on the child. Miriam, his sister, watched from a distance.

The daughter of the king and her maidens just then came to the river to bathe. She saw the little basket, sent for it, and had it opened. And when she beheld the crying babe, she exclaimed with pity, “Oh ! this is one of

the Hebrews' children." When Miriam heard these words, she ran to the princess, and said, "May I go and get thee a Hebrew woman who can nurse the child?" The princess said, "Do go!" Miriam hastened and brought her mother, and the princess said to her: "Take this child and nurse him for me, and I will give thee thy wages!" With a heart full of joy and thanks to God, the mother took her beloved child in her arms, and went home. And when the child had grown, she returned him again to the princess, who adopted him as a son. She called his name Moses, for, she said, "I did draw him out of the water."

MORAL LESSONS.—A mother's heart is closely attached to her children. Like the mother of Moses, so are your parents, dear children, constantly looking after your well-being. Love and obey them. Learn from Miriam to take care of your younger brothers and sisters.

"The eyes of the Eternal are directed unto the righteous, and His ears unto their petitions.—Ps. xxxiv. 16.

III. MOSES' FLIGHT FROM EGYPT.

As the adopted son of the king's daughter, Moses enjoyed a princely treatment, and received a superior education. But he did not forget his brother Israelites. He despised the Egyptian splendor, when he thought of the sufferings of his oppressed brethren. One day he saw an Egyptian abusing and striking a Hebrew, and in his anger he slew the Egyptian, and hid his body in the sand. The following day, he saw two Hebrew men striving together, and he said to the aggressor, "Why strikest thou thy neighbor?" And he answered, "Who made

thee our judge? Dost thou intend to slay me as thou didst slay the Egyptian?" When Moses heard these words, he said to himself, "Truly that matter is known." And so it was, for the king had already heard of it, and sought to kill him. To escape danger he took to flight, and went toward Midian (Arabia). Tired and exhausted, he arrived there and sat down to rest himself near a well. The seven daughters of Jethro, a priest of Midian, just came and drew water for their father's flocks, but were driven back by some shepherds loitering near the well. Such rude conduct displeased Moses, and he rose and assisted them watering their flocks.

Jethro, being surprised by his daughters' early return, said to them, "What brings you home so early to-day?" And they answered, "An Egyptian man took our part against the herdsmen, and watered our flocks." The father now asked them, "And where is he? Why have you left the man? Go and invite him to be our guest!" The daughters obeyed, and Moses accepted their invitation. Jethro welcomed the stranger, and offered him the hospitality of his home. Kind men soon feel attached to each other; hence, it was not long before a true friendship sprang up between Jethro and Moses. He became the favorite of the family, and consented to stay with them, and Jethro gave him his daughter Zipporah as a wife. God blessed their wedded life with two sons. Moses called the name of his first-born Gershom, for he said, "A stranger (*Ger*) have I been in a strange land." And the later-born he called Eliezer, for he said, "God (*El*) has been my help (*Esri*), and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh."

MORAL LESSONS.—In every station of life, preserve a

good heart. Let not prosperity harden it, nor high rank fill it with vanity. God guides our steps.

“Above all that is worth guarding, guard thy heart, for from it springs the fountain of life.”—Prov. iv. 23.

IV. MOSES' MISSION.

Moses' occupation in Midian was that of a shepherd. For over forty years he took care of the flock of his father-in-law. In his loneliness, the sufferings of his brethren in Egypt must have continually engaged his mind.

One day he led his flocks into the inner parts of the desert, toward the mountain Horeb, when the flames of a burning bush attracted his attention, and he said to himself, “I will go there and see the great sight, why the fire does not consume the bush.” On approaching it, he heard a voice out of the midst of the bush saying: “Moses, Moses! Do not come hither; take off thy shoes from thy feet, for thou art standing upon sacred ground.” Moses bowing in reverence, obeyed, and the voice continued to speak: “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I have seen the sufferings of my people in Egypt, their cries against their oppressors come to my ears. Through thee shall they be delivered and take possession of the land which I have promised to their fathers. Go, therefore, to Pharaoh and bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” Moses did not think himself fit for so great a mission, and he modestly said: “O God, who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and deliver the Israelites? They even would doubt whether Thou didst send me, and if they ask Thy name, what shall I say unto them?” And God said: “I shall be with

thee ; and to the children of Israel thou shalt say : ‘ The Eternal being that was, is, and ever will be (*“ I will be that I will be ”*) has sent me.’ ” While Moses was still hesitating and considering, God showed him how to perform several miraculous acts.

He was to cast his staff on the ground, and it was changed into a serpent ; he was to grasp it by the tail, and it again became a staff. He was to put his hand in his bosom and on taking it out, it was leprous, white as snow. Repeating the act, his hand was healed again. He was to pour some water of the river upon the dry land, and it was changed into blood. “ By these signs,” said God, “ they will believe that the God of their fathers has appeared to thee.” Moses now said : “ Thou knowest, O God, that I am not a man of speech, for I am of a heavy mouth and a heavy tongue.” Thereupon God said : “ Who has endowed man with the gift of speech ? Who makes him dumb or deaf, seeing or blind ? Am I not the Eternal ? ” Moses again answered : “ O Lord God, send some one else.” And God said : “ Thy brother Aaron shall meet and assist thee, and I will be with both of you. He shall speak and thou shalt perform the wonders.” Moses now returned to Jethro, his father-in-law, and informed him of his wonderful experience and his important mission. And Jethro said : “ Go in peace.”

MORAL LESSONS.—God is everywhere ; He is omnipresent ; He knows everything ; He is omniscient. The sufferings of man are known to Him, and He appoints messengers for their relief. His ways are marvelous. His voice is heard and understood by men whose hearts and minds are devoted to His service.

Children, learn from Moses that any honest occupa-

tion is honorable. Have ever a feeling heart for suffering humanity. Beware of being boastful, but rather let modesty be a prominent feature of your character.

"A man's pride shall bring him low, but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit."—Prov. xxxix. 23.

V. MOSES' RETURN TO EGYPT.

Moses and his family bade farewell to their father Jethro, and left Midian. God advised Aaron to meet them in the desert, and their meeting was a source of pleasure and joy to both. Moses told his brother of their mission, and together they went toward Egypt. On their arrival they assembled the elders of the Israelites, and Aaron delivered to them the message of God, and Moses performed those miracles in the presence of the people. The idea of God, newly awakened among them, filled their hearts with trust in His promises, and they prostrated themselves before Him in gratitude, and believed in Him and in His messengers.

Moses and Aaron, eighty and eighty-three years of age, respectively, then went before Pharaoh, and addressed him, saying: "Thus saith the Eternal, the God of Israel: 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.'" And Pharaoh said: "Who is the Eternal that I shall hearken unto his voice? I know him not, and I will not send off the people." And to the taskmasters he said: "These men come to disturb the people at their work. Be ye the more severe with them, for they are idle. Give them no more straw for making bricks; force them to find it themselves in the fields, and still deliver the same number."

The new order of the king, being strictly enforced,

caused still heavier groaning to the poor slaves, and they heaped reproaches upon Moses and Aaron. Moses besought God, saying: "Wherefore hast Thou let so much evil come upon this people? Why is it that Thou hast sent me, since my speaking to the king has but harmed them?" And he received this answer: "Thou shalt see how I will deal with Pharaoh; he will surely send them off—nay, my power will force him to drive them away. Tell the people that I will redeem them, and bring them into the land which I have promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and that I will take them unto me as a people, and I will be unto them a God." Moses reported these words to the elders and the people, but their depressed spirit and cruel bondage suffered them not to listen to him.

MORAL LESSONS.—If at first you don't succeed, despair not; try, try again.

VI. THE PLAGUES.

Moses and Aaron called again on Pharaoh, and while repeating their message performed before him some of their feats; but when, by his order, his magicians, by their secret arts, did the same, the king refused to obey. Moses thereupon told the king that God would send severe plagues over Egypt, should he continue to disobey; but to no effect. The worshiper of his Egyptian gods would not acknowledge the power of the God of the Hebrews, ere His mighty hand weighed heavily upon him, as in the following manner: The waters in the streams, rivers, ponds, and pools were turned to blood, and became unfit for any use. Immense numbers of

frogs, vermin, wild beasts, a severe pestilence, hordes of locusts, inflammatory boils, thunder and hail storm and a dense darkness, lasting three days, came over Egypt at intervals, bringing terror and destruction to the men, cattle, and the fields of Egypt, while the Israelites and their possessions were throughout spared therefrom.

Pharaoh humbled himself and promised obedience after each of these various plagues. He even exclaimed: "God is just, and I and my people are wicked, pray for me;" but no sooner did, upon Moses' prayer, the plague cease, than the king hardened his heart and refused to keep his promise.

VII.—THE DEPARTURE OF THE ISRAELITES.

The last of the ten plagues was the sudden death of every first-born of the Egyptians. God said to Moses: "Yet one plague I will bring upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians, then they will let you go. About midnight of the fourteenth day of the first month, Nisan, every first-born of the Egyptians shall suddenly perish. Let, therefore, the people be ready for the journey. Command each head of a family to kill a lamb, and to sprinkle its blood at the door-posts. The lamb shall be roasted and eaten by the families on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs."

Moses gave these orders to his people, and informed them and the king also of the coming event. The night of the fourteenth day of Nisan found every family of the Israelites assembled around the paschal lamb, and at the same time fully dressed, ready to march at a moment's notice. There arose a bitter, terrible cry from the houses of the Egyptians. The first-born in every house, from

the palace to the hut, lay dead upon his couch. The king and the Egyptians sent for Moses, crying: "Go forth, depart, else we shall all be dead men." The word of God was thus literally fulfilled. The hour of redemption was at hand, and Moses and Aaron marched forth with the Israelites, 600,000 men, besides women and children, followed by a mixed multitude of strangers, and herds of cattle and sheep. The dough for bread which they had prepared they carried along in bundles, and baked it by the heat of the sun, on their journey. In all this haste Moses did not forget to take the bones of Joseph with him. In memory of this wondrous delivery we are commanded annually to celebrate Pesach (the Passover festival) from the evening of the fourteenth day of Nisan for seven days.

MORAL LESSONS.—In these two chapters, dear children, we learn, on the one hand, of the evil consequences of stubbornness or obstinate disobedience which only severe punishments will master; and, on the other hand, we perceive the power, justice, mercy, and truthfulness of God. All nature stands in His service; reverence and obey Him. Be mindful of a given promise to attend to it.

VIII. PHARAOH'S PURSUIT AND HIS TOTAL DESTRUCTION.

When Pharaoh and the Egyptians had recovered from their panic, they regretted having sent away the Israelites, and at once prepared for a speedy pursuit. The Israelites had nearly reached the Red Sea, when they beheld their enemies. Escape seemed impossible. In front of them

there was the sea ; in the rear, Pharaoh and his army ; on the right and left, steep rocks. At once a pillar of cloud settled down between the pursued and the pursuers, enveloping the camp of the Egyptians in complete darkness. The Israelites did not manifest any trust in God in this hour of peril. They heaped reproaches upon Moses, saying: "Wherefore hast thou taken us away from Egypt? We would rather have served the Egyptians than die in the wilderness. Let us go back." But Moses replied: "Fear ye not; God will fight for you. These Egyptians whom you see and fear to-day, will never trouble you any more. Only wait and trust in the salvation of your God." God now caused a strong east wind to blow all night which divided the waters, raising them like two walls, and drying the sea-bottom. And to Moses He said: "Raise thy staff and march on." The Israelites marched onward and had already safely reached the other shore, when the Egyptians started in pursuit. Arrived midway on their passage, God sent confusion among them, the wheels of their chariots became entangled and broken, and their march impeded. "Let us return," they cried; "for God fights for them." But at that instant Moses, at God's command, again raised his staff, and with a tremendous force the waters returned and broke over the heads of the pursuers, and drowned every one of them. Then sang Moses and the Israelites this song unto the Eternal:

"My strength and my song is Jah, and He became my salvation.

"He is my God and I will glorify Him; the God of my fathers, I will exalt Him.

"Thy right hand, O God, is glorious in power; Thy right hand, O Eternal, crushes the enemy.

“Who is like unto Thee, O God, among the mighty?
Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in
praises, doing wonders?”

“The Eternal will reign forever and ever.”

MORAL LESSONS.—Despair not when danger is threat-
ening, but face it and trust in God. His assistance is
nigh when all human efforts seem of no avail. God’s
justice metes out to man with his own measure (מִדָּה
בְּמִדָּה).

“The Eternal is for me; I will not fear; what can
man do unto me?”—Ps. cxviii. 6.

IX. ISRAEL’S JOURNEY THROUGH THE WIL- DERNESS.

The Israelites marched from the Red Sea into the
desert. They were for three days in want of water, when
at last they found some at Marah, which, however, was
bitter, wherefore they murmured. Moses prayed to God,
and was shown a tree which, on being cast into the water,
sweetened it. The next resting-place was Elim. Here
they found twelve wells, surrounded by seventy palm-
trees. Moving onward they reached the wilderness of
Sin, and here their provisions failed. Instead of looking
up to God and praying for His kind help, they again
broke out into murmurings. God had pity on them and
in the evening sent them an extensive flight of quails
which rested upon the camp, and in the morning the
earth was covered with little white grains, pleasant to the
taste. When the people saw them for the first time, they
said to each other: “What is it?” (Man-hu?) And
Moses said: “It is the bread which God gives you for

food. Gather daily one measure thereof for each person in your family, and keep none over night. But on the sixth day of the week gather two measures for each person and save one of it for the next day; *for the seventh day is the Sabbath unto the Eternal your God*; there will be no manna on that day." But not every one of the children of Israel obeyed these instructions. Some kept food from one day to another, but found it spoiled and full of worms; others went out on Sabbath morning, but had to return empty-handed. Moses rebuked the people in the name of God, saying: "How long refuse ye to keep my laws? God commanded you to rest on the Sabbath; therefore remain, every one of you, in his place on the Sabbath-day;" and the people rested on the seventh day. Moses told Aaron to lay up a bottle of manna as a memorial for coming generations, and he did so. With this kind of food God fed Israel in the wilderness for forty years, until they took possession of the promised land.

MORAL LESSONS.—The road to success leads freely through hardships and privations; stand them with manly courage and despair not. Mind the instructions of your leaders, act in accordance with the laws of God, and He will not forsake you, and your strength will not fail you.

X. NEW TROUBLES.

The Israelites moved on and encamped at Refidim. Here they again were in want of water and rebuked Moses, saying: "Wherefore hast thou taken us away from Egypt, where we had plenty of everything?" Moses prayed to God, and God heard his prayer. He said to Moses: "Go before the people and strike with

thy staff that rock yonder." Moses did so, and a rich well of fresh water burst forth from the rock. He called the name of this place Massah (Temptation) and Meribah (Strife). Scarcely relieved from this trouble the Israelites were attacked by hostile neighbors, the Amalekites. This cruel people forcibly threw themselves upon the Israelites, and especially upon the weak, the sick, the women and children. Moses charged Joshua to choose some select men and meet the enemy. He himself, with Aaron and Hur, ascended the mountain, and with uplifted hands, supported by his companions, from morning till evening, encouraged his men to victory. The enemy was routed, and Moses built an altar and called it "Adonai Nissi," "God is my banner." By order of God Moses recorded this action, and enjoined his people never to forget the mean and cruel treatment of the Amalekites, but after enjoying quiet in the promised land, to utterly destroy the Amalekites and their very name.

MORAL LESSONS.—God is almighty, forbearing, and kind. Love, trust, and obey Him.

Never attack those who are younger and weaker than yourselves; to shield, to protect, and to assist them is our duty.

Ascribe to the Eternal your success.

"Beware that thou forget not the Eternal thy God, lest thou mightest say in thine heart, My power and the strength of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Eternal thy God; for it is He that giveth thee power (to accomplish all)."—Deut. viii. 11.

XI. MEETING OF JETHRO AND MOSES.

When Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, heard of this victory against the Amalekites and of the wondrous acts which God had performed for the Israelites, then he and his daughter Zipporah, the wife of Moses, and her two sons, went to meet Moses. Moses welcomed them with a joyful heart and received their sincerest congratulations. Jethro said: "Blessed be the Lord who has delivered you out of Egypt; now do I know that the Lord is greater than all gods."

On the next day, Jethro observed how the people all day long came to Moses to settle their disputes and to receive instruction in the law of God. And Jethro said to Moses: "This is too fatiguing, both for thee and for them. Rather select wise, just, and truthful men as thy assistants, so that thou wilt only hear and judge the most difficult cases." Moses at once followed these wise suggestions, and appointed judges over thousands, over hundreds, over fifties and over tens, and both he and the people felt considerably relieved.

MORAL LESSONS.—Accept good advice whencesoever it may come.

"Give to the wise (instruction), and he will become yet wiser; impart knowledge to the righteous, and he will increase his information."—Prov. ix. 9.

XII. ISRAEL AT MOUNT SINAI.

In the third month after their departure from Egypt, the Israelites arrived near Mount Sinai. They were nu-

merous and strong, had learned to endure hardships and trouble, and were physically prepared to make war with the inhabitants of Canaan, and take possession of that land which God had promised their fathers. But they were still in want of an important means which is indispensable to a nation's prosperity. They were in want of *Religion*, which alone will acquaint man with his duties and lead him into the path of righteousness and virtue. Therefore God said to Moses: "Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: You have seen that which I have done unto the Egyptians, and how I did bear you as upon eagles' wings. If you will now obey my voice and keep my commandments, then you shall be unto Me a peculiar treasure; a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Moses delivered this message to the people, and they answered as with one voice: "All that the Eternal hath spoken we will do."

MORAL LESSONS.—Religion is a sure guide to a moral, useful life, and a source of real contentment to those who practice its sublime lessons. In days of prosperity it directs our eyes and hearts to look thankfully up to Him from whom all blessing comes, and in hours of adversity and tribulation it teaches to submissively trust and hope in Him whose ways are just and merciful, and that all He does leads to our own best. Try, dear children, by your good conduct to be ever worthy of the precious gift which God in His kindness has intrusted our fathers with. Honor their memory and show your respect to them, and your gratitude to God, by faithfully adhering to their promise: "All that the Eternal hath spoken we will do."

XIII. THE REVELATION ON SINAI.

Moses returned the answer of the people, and God said to him: "Tell them to sanctify themselves to-day and to-morrow, to wash their clothes and to be prepared for the third day; at the sound of the trumpet let them appear at the foot of the mountain within the boundary lines which thou shalt make."

The third day came, and the people were placed in lines, according to order. Tremendous lightning and severe thunder filled the air. A dense cloud covered Mt. Sinai. Mighty and mightier resounded the Shofar. Nature itself seemed to be in uproar. At once all became silent, and the voice of God was plainly heard, proclaiming the following "Ten Words:"

1. I am the Eternal, thy God, who has brought thee forth out of the land of Mizraim, out of the house of bondage.

2. Thou shalt have no other gods before me; thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of that which is in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor serve them; for I, the Eternal, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of fathers upon children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Eternal thy God in vain, for the Eternal will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.

4. Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days thou shalt labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Eternal, thy God. On it thou shalt not do any work; neither thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger who is within thy gates; for in six days the Eternal made the heaven and the earth, the sea and all that is therein, and he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Eternal blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.

5. Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be prolonged upon the earth which the Eternal thy God giveth thee.

6. Thou shalt not kill.

7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

8. Thou shalt not steal.

9. Thou shalt not testify against thy neighbor as a false witness.

10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

The whole people received these sacred lessons with fear and trembling, and they said to Moses: "Speak thou with us and we will listen, but let not God speak with us, lest we die." Moses replied: "Fear ye not, God appeared to you only in His glory, to fill you with reverence toward Him, and that you may not lead a vicious, sinful life." In memory of this great event, we celebrate yearly the sixth day of the third month Sivan as a festival of the first ripe fruits and of receiving the holy law.

XIV. OTHER IMPORTANT LAWS.

Besides the "Ten Words" or "Decalogue" which God revealed to the whole congregation of Israel, Moses, by the order of God, instituted other important laws for the proper government of his people. Laws against protracted servitude: a Hebrew servant was to serve but for six years, in the seventh he was to be set free.

Laws regarding the security of life and property. Man-slaughter, striking or cursing father or mother, or stealing a person and selling it, were to be considered capital offences and punished by death.

Laws prohibiting the oppression of strangers, widows, and orphans.

Laws forbidding bribery and usury; or keeping garments as pledges over night.

Laws concerning the year of release, providing for the poor and needy.

Moses laid these laws before the elders and the people, and they agreeably answered: "All that the Eternal has said, we will do."

XV. THE GOLDEN CALF.

The golden calf was an idol which Aaron made for the Israelites, during the absence of Moses. The Scriptures narrate the fact as follows: God said to Moses, "Come up to me to the Mount, and I will give thee the tablets of stone upon which I have written the 'Ten Words.'" Moses intrusted his brother Aaron with the care of the people, went up and tarried forty days and forty nights

in the clouds which hung over the mountain. The people, ignorant of the cause of the protracted absence of their leader, grew alarmed, impatient, and unruly. They appeared in large numbers before Aaron and said to him: "Up, make us gods that shall go before us, for we know not what has become of that man Moses." Aaron did not prove himself the man for this trying occasion. His manly courage failed him to energetically resist such an unreasonable, sinful demand. He said to them: "Take out the golden earrings from the ears of your wives, daughters, and sons!" Instantly they stripped themselves of these ornaments and placed them before him.

The Egyptians venerated the form of the sacred bull as one of their principal deities. Aaron, therefore, melted the precious metal and shaped it into the form of a calf.

When the people saw the image, they shouted in wild joy: "*This is thy God. O Israel! who has brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*"

Then God said to Moses, "Go down, for thy people have become corrupt! They soon turned aside from the way which I have commanded them."

Moses descended with the two tablets of stone in his hand. Joshua awaited him at the foot of the mountain, and they both heard the noise in the camp. When they came near enough to understand its nature, and as they saw the wild dances around the idol, Moses, full of anger and just indignation, threw the tablets to the ground, so that they were broken; with manly courage he seized the idol, burnt it with fire, shattered it into atoms, and exclaimed, "Whosoever is for the Eternal, let him come over to my side;" and the tribe of Levi went over

Moses ordered them to charge into the midst of the sinners, and punish them. About three thousand of them fell on that day.

On the next morning Moses said to the people: "You have committed a great sin, I will go up the mountain and ask God's pardon." And he besought God, saying: "O Eternal, forgive them, I pray Thee! Show Thy great mercy to the people whom Thou hast brought forth from Egypt with a mighty hand. Why should the Egyptians say, For evil He has delivered them, to slay them in the wilderness. Remember Thy covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." And God graciously listened to this fervent prayer, and Moses perceived the voice of God exclaiming: "The Eternal God is merciful and gracious, long suffering and of great kindness and truth, keeping kindness unto the thousandth (generation), forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty."

Moses then prepared two other tablets of stone, likewise engraven by the finger of God, with the "Ten Words," and returned and reported to his people the words of God.

MORAL LESSONS.—The idea of a spiritual Supreme Being was not yet fully understood by the young nation of Israel; the worship of idols by the Egyptians was still too fresh in their minds; the long absence of Moses set them wild, the weakness of Aaron encouraged them in their folly.

Even in our days the worship of gold is prevalent to a great extent, so that Sabbaths and festivals are profaned and violated for the accumulation of gold and silver. Ingratitude, disobedience, and impatience are vices which lead to sin and trouble.

Remember a given promise and abide by it. (All that the Eternal has spoken, we will do.) If you have left the path of duty, do not delay to return to it. Suppress whimsical desires, reject unreasonable demands, act promptly in cases of emergencies. God is merciful.

XVI. THE TABERNACLE.

The tabernacle was a portable sanctuary in the wilderness. Moses had it made in obedience to instructions which he had received from God, expressed in the words of the Scriptures, "And they shall make unto me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst."

The materials of the tabernacle, which the people lavishly furnished, were gold, silver, brass, skins (for the covering), acacia wood and embroidered hangings. Bezaleel and Ahaliab were the chief designers and constructors of that magnificent tent. A curtain, supported by pillars, divided it into two unequal divisions—the "*Holy of Holies*" and the "*Holy*." The former contained the ark with the tablets of the covenant. The high-priest alone, and he only on the Day of Atonement, had access to this portion of the sanctuary. The Holy, the larger division before the curtain, contained in the centre the altar of incense, and north and south the table of the shew-breads and the golden candlestick. An extensive open inclosure of pillars and hangings, called the court, surrounded the tabernacle, and served for the reception of the people. There were the altar of burnt-offering, the laver, and other utensils required for the sacrifices.

MORAL LESSONS.—The liberal spirit manifested by

the Israelites in contributing so generously towards the sanctuary, should stimulate us to aid willingly and with an open hand all benevolent institutions, and to bear our share of the expenditures of temples and schools.

XVII. AARON AND HIS SONS.

God commanded Moses to anoint his brother Aaron as high-priest, and his sons Nadab, Abihu, El'azar, and Ithamar as his assistants, to attend to the service in the tabernacle. He also received instructions as to the various garments of the priests. As they were to be in person and character pure and free from any blemish, so should their outward appearance, their dress, testify to the dignity of their distinguished offices.

The common priests, therefore, had to appear in white linen suits; the dress of the high-priest was to be of a still more imposing nature in material and trimming. The shoulder-pieces of the upper garment (Meil) were to be fastened by two precious stones, in each of which the names of six tribes of Israel were to be engraved. Upon a breast-plate (Choshen Hamishpot—breast-plate of the judgment) there were to be twelve precious stones, set in four rows, likewise engraved with the names of the tribes. A white turban, the mitre (miznefeth), was to have a golden plate bearing the inscription: "Holy unto the Eternal." These ornaments were constantly to remind him and the people that he was in the service of God, and that their welfare should fill his heart.

MORAL LESSONS.—Children, let us glean from this story the important lesson that it is a sacred duty to fully justify a trust placed in us, through exemplary

behavior; to fill worthily any office for which we are selected or chosen, and to honor our employer both through a respectable outward appearance and an unblemished character.

XVIII. THE SERVICE IN THE SANCTUARY.

The sanctuary, now called Temple or Synagogue, is a place where people assemble to worship God.

At the early period of Israel's existence and through those of the first and second temple, the service consisted in offering sacrifices. This mode of divine worship is as old as the human family itself. Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob built altars and offered sacrifices. But, while they offered to the true, living God of heaven and earth, the heathen nations, the Egyptians, among whom the Israelites dwelt for centuries, brought their offerings to their numerous idols, which either were the works of their own hands or objects of nature—sun, moon, stars, etc. Even human sacrifices of their own sons and daughters they offered up to these idols (Moloch).

To counteract these evil influences was the unceasing care of the God-enlightened and God-inspired educator, Moses. The infant Israel was to be educated as a God-fearing, holy nation. But education does not allow of hasty strides. Step by step their thoughts and deeds were to be directed to the one and only God. Sacrificial worship had to be tolerated, but in a different, modified manner. The people were allowed to offer their sacrifices only at the place chosen by God—in the court of the sanctuary, and there even only at certain times and by the divinely-appointed priests. There, where those

immortal Ten Words were deposited, should Israel appear to remember and to strengthen the covenant which God made with them. There, where the seven-armed candlestick, fed by pure olive oil, shed forth its brilliant light; there, where the continual fire was burning upon the altar, there Israel should be reminded to guard and to nourish the flame of pure religion received from the mouth of God upon Sinai.

There were principally three kinds of sacrifices: the sin-offering, to awaken repentance; the burnt-offering, to express our allegiance and our submission to God, who is the possessor of the whole creation; and the peace-offering, expressive of the idea that we should dedicate our lives to God, and ever try to be in peace and harmony with God, with our fellow-men, and with ourselves. (Daily, national, and individual thank-offerings.) The tabernacle was broken up when the Israelites moved onward, and was re-erected when they encamped. The tribe of Levi attended to that work, under the direction of the priests.

The priests had the entire care of the sanctuary; hence, they were forbidden to come in contact with anything unclean. They also had to look, in some respects, after the sanitary condition of the people, in guarding against the spread of contagious diseases. It was finally their privilege to pronounce that beautiful blessing over the Israelites:

“May God bless and guard thee; may God let His countenance shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; may God lift His countenance upon thee and give thee peace.”

Nadab and Abihu enjoyed the priestly office for but a short time. They both, on their own account, took their

censers, put strange fire therein (not from the altar of the Eternal) and incense thereon, thus parading before the people functions which God had not commanded them. Suddenly fire from heaven fell upon them and consumed them. Moses, in exhorting his afflicted brother to be resigned, said to him: "Thus saith the Lord: 'Through those who are near me will I be sanctified, and before all the people will I be honored.'" And Aaron suffered this fatal calamity with profound resignation; for the Scriptures report: "And Aaron was silent."

MORAL LESSONS.—Dear children, we have no longer sacrificial offerings; they belong to bygone ages, and terminated with the destruction of the second temple at Jerusalem. But we have in their place prayers, readings of portions of the law, and sermons. We have no longer a national sanctuary, but we are in possession of synagogues and temples. Let us, dear children, when their portals are opened, regularly attend divine service. Let us be devoted in our prayers, and listen attentively to the discourses and sermons of our ministers. But let us, in addition to this, diligently and conscientiously take care of our priestly mission through daily home devotion and a God-pleasing behavior in all the various ways of life.

Be also warned by the mournful fate of Nadab and Abihu against disobedience. And from Aaron learn to silently submit to the decrees of God.

"Take with you words and return to the Eternal; say unto Him: 'Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, and let us repay the steers with (the prayers of) our lips.'"—Hosea xiv. 3.

XIX. MORAL LAWS.

The essence of the moral laws which God imparted to Moses to impress upon the minds of the Israelites, is expressed in the words of the Scriptures: "Ye shall be holy, for I, the Eternal your God, am holy."

Of the numerous moral precepts, let us remember the following:

1. "Ye shall fear every one his mother and his father and keep my Sabbath; I am the Eternal your God."

2. "Turn ye not unto idols nor make to yourself molten gods."

3. "When ye reap the harvest of your fields, you shall not wholly reap its corners; leave them for the poor and the stranger."

4. "Ye shall not steal; neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another."

5. "Ye shall not swear falsely by my name, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God."

6. "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him, nor shall abide with thee the wages of him that is hired, through the night."

7. "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind."

8. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the great."

9. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among the people."

10. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou mayest rebuke thy neighbor, but not bear sin on account of him."

11. "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

12. "Before the hoary head shalt thou rise, and honor the face of the old man."

13. "If a stranger sojourn with thee, ye shall not vex him. As one born in the land among you shall be unto you the stranger, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

14. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in long measure, in weight, or in dry measure. Just balances, just weights, a just Ephah (name of a dry-measure) and a just Hin (name of a wet measure) shall ye have."

15. "Ye shall not make any incision in your flesh for a dead."

16. "If thy brother become poor and helpless, then thou shalt assist him, be he a stranger or a sojourner, let him live with thee. Thou shalt not take of him any usury or increase."

Other important laws of a liberal character which were to be observed after the Israelites had taken possession of the promised land were those concerning the Sabbatical and the Jubilee years. They were to prevent the total impoverishment of the land and its inhabitants.

After six years of sowing and reaping, the seventh year should be a Sabbath to the land. Neither the sowing of the fields nor the pruning of the vineyards should be attended to. The fruits which grew spontaneously were free to all. After the lapse of seven Sabbatical or seven times seven years, there should be a year of Jubilee, when every one became again the sole and rightful owner of his former rights and possessions. Condition-

ally upon the faithful observance of these various laws and statutes, God promised Israel through Moses His blessings: Rain in due season, rich harvests, and, above all, undisturbed health and peace. Should the people, however, be neglectful of their duties and disobedient to the laws to God, He held out to them His severe punishments: famine, disease, anxiety, and prostration.

XX. SABBATH AND FESTIVALS.

Moses, the great legislator, the true servant of God, ever acting by His order and in His spirit, ordained beside the weekly Sabbath yet the following festive seasons for the rest and enjoyment of his people, for their remembering and celebrating past important events in their history, as well as for their moral elevation and purification, and for strengthening and perpetuating the religious idea among themselves to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

1. PESACH, *Passover or Feast of Unleavened Bread*, from the 15th to the 21st day of the first month of Nisan, commemorating the redemption from the Egyptian bondage.

2. SHEBUOTH, *Feast of Weeks, or Feast of First Ripe Fruits, also Day of Giving the Law*, on the 6th day of the third month of Sivan.

3. SUKKOTH, *Feast of Tabernacles, or Harvest Feast*, from the 15th to the 21st day of the seventh month Tishri, followed by AZERETH, the concluding feast.

On these three feasts of joy, the Israelites were to appear in Jerusalem during the existence of the temple for reunion and religious revival.

4. ROSH HOSHANAH, *New Year, or Day of Remembrance and Blowing the Trumpet* (Shofar), on the first of Tishri.

5. JOM HAKKIPURIM, *Day of Atonement*, on the 10th of Tishri.

These two latter feasts are to be devoted to self-examination into our conduct and to repentance.

XXI. TAB'ERAH. KIBROTH-HATTA AVAH.

Tab'erah (burning) was a place in the wilderness, so called by Moses, on account of a fire sent by God in the outskirts of the camp of the Israelites, by which many were consumed in consequence of their murmurings and bitter complaints of fatigue, when they were only a few days on their journey from the wilderness of Sinai. Upon a sincere prayer of Moses, the fire disappeared.

Kibroth-Hatta'avah (graves of the lusting) was a place so called, because it contained the numerous graves of those people who lusted for flesh and perished through a plague. It so happened that the mixed multitude, who accompanied the Israelites, loathed the manna, lusted for flesh, and excited the people. "Give us flesh to eat," they cried. "We remember the fish which we could eat in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons, the onions and the garlic. But now our soul is faint; there is nothing but the manna."

Moses said to God, "I cannot bear alone the trouble and the burden of this people." And the Eternal said unto Moses, "Select seventy men of the elders of Israel, and I will put my spirit upon them, and they shall bear with thee the burden of the people. And as to the lust-

ing people, I will give them flesh to eat for a full month, until they get tired of it." When Moses thought this impossible, God said, "Should the hand of the Eternal be too short?" And God sent forth a wind, which drove up quails from the sea over the camp. The Israelites gathered them eagerly into large heaps, and so glutted themselves, that the new food became disgusting and sickening to them. A large number of them fell sick and died, and were here buried.

MORAL LESSONS.—Be satisfied with your lot. Follow not the evil examples of the low and wicked, else you will share their sad fate.

"My son, if sinners wish to entice thee, consent thou not; walk not on the way with them, withhold thy foot from their path."—Prov. i. 10, 15.

XXII. MIRIAM AND AARON AGAINST MOSES.

At Hazeroth, the next station, Moses experienced opposition in his own family. Miriam and Aaron spoke against his marriage to an Ethiopian woman and added: "Has then the Lord only spoken with Moses? Did He not speak also with us?" Moses, the meekest living man, did not answer. But God said, "If there be a prophet like your kind, I, the Eternal, do make myself known to him in a vision, in a dream do I speak with him. Not so is my servant Moses; in all my house is he faithful. Why then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

Miriam became leprous, white as snow, and was shut up seven days outside of the camp. Aaron humbled himself and acknowledged their joint offense, and Moses

prayed, "Heal her, O Eternal, I beseech Thee!" and his prayer was heard.

MORAL LESSONS.—Do not speak evil of any one, nor abusively of your relatives. Be modest, forbearing, and forgiving like Moses.

"A sound heart is the life of flesh, but envy the rottenness of the bones"—Prov. xiv. 30.

XXIII. THE SPIES.

After the children of Israel had arrived at Kadesh-Barnea, in the wilderness of Paran, on the southern border of Canaan, Moses, upon the order of God, sent out twelve men, the prince of each tribe, to spy the land of Canaan, as to its inhabitants, its fertility, its situation, and its defenses. The twelve men thus selected set out at harvest time, and after a thorough survey of forty days they returned, exhibited some choice fruits which they had collected, and ten of them agreed in the following report: "The land whither thou didst send us is truly a good one, overflowing with milk and honey. But its people are numerous and strong, its cities are fortified, and we have even seen there the children of Anak (giants). We are unable to contend against them."

Joshua and Caleb, the remaining two of the spies, opposed these statements and said: "Fear you not, we can easily conquer these people, like bread we will consume them; God will be with us, therefore stop your murmurings and sin not against Him." But the people became wild, reproached Moses and Aaron, and even attempted to stone Joshua and Caleb, and cried: "Let us appoint a chief and return to Egypt."

Then the glory of God appeared before the tabernacle, and God said to Moses: "How long will this people provoke me? How long will it be, ere they believe me for all the signs which I have shown among them? I will smite them with pestilence, and disinherit them; and will make of thee a greater and mightier nation than they." And Moses said unto the Eternal: "Pardon, O God, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven them from Egypt even until now." And God said: "I have pardoned them according to thy word but none of them, above the age of twenty years, shall see the land which they have despised. Lead them back toward the wilderness. Forty years, according to the forty days of search, shall they wander about therein, until that entire sinful generation shall have passed away. But Joshua and Caleb, and the innocent children of those men who sinned against me, they shall become the possessors of the blessed land."

The ten men who caused this rebellion died instantly through a plague. The Israelites received these tidings with sadness, and mourned their folly. "We have sinned against the Eternal," said they, "let us go up to the place." Moses said: "Do not go up, for God will not be with you." They went up in spite of his warning, and many of them were slain by the Amalekites and the Canaanites.

MORAL LESSONS.—Here, dear children, another striking picture is placed before our view, showing the men of calumny, and their fatal punishment on the one side; and the men of truth and their reward on the other; and between them stands exalted the venerable figure of Moses stretching forth his hands toward the offended

deity, and praying for mercy and pardon. Ingratitude toward God and lack of confidence in Him, which led to cowardice, were the causes of this rebellion and its fatal consequences. Beware of falsehood and adhere to truth; unite with those who try to quiet ill-grounded fears, and assist in keeping off calamities and bloodshed. Trust in God and rely on His promises. Courage and perseverance lead to victory.

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”—Prov. xviii. 21.

“Guard thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.”—Ps. xxxiv. 13.

XXIV. KORAH.

Korah, a man of the tribe of Levi, supported by Dathan and Abiram from the tribe of Reuben, and by two hundred and fifty princes of Israel, instigated a revolt against Moses and Aaron. They said to them: “You take too much upon you, the leadership and the priesthood; the whole congregation of Israel is holy, and therefore as well entitled to officiate as yourselves.” Moses replied: “You sons of Levi are distinguished as the inheritance of God; you assist at the service in the tabernacle, and now you aspire also to the priesthood. Let God show whom He has chosen. Take each of you his censer and put fire and incense in it, and appear tomorrow before the Eternal. Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, but they refused to come and continued to incite the people to rebellion.

On the morrow, when they were all assembled, the glory of the Eternal appeared, and God said to Moses and

Aaron : "Separate yourselves from this assembly, for I will consume them in a moment." Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces, and said : "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh ! This one man doth sin, and wouldst Thou be wroth with all the congregation ?" And God said to Moses : "Direct the people to depart from the tents of these wicked men, and to touch nothing of theirs, lest they be consumed in all their sins." Moses did so and predicted at the same time their unnatural death. When the people had withdrawn, the earth opened and swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and all that which belonged to them. A fire from heaven consumed their adherents. The frightened people fled at their cry ; but the next morning, they again gave vent to their bitter feelings against Moses and Aaron, saying : "You have caused the death of those men." In consequence of this unsubmissive spirit, God sent a plague among them by which fourteen thousand and seven hundred of their number perished.

Moses, by the command of God, ordered Eleazar to beat the censers of the sinners into plates and cover therewith the altar as a memorial unto Israel that none but the seed of Aaron should burn incense before God, and he did so.

The revolutionary spirit of the people having been subdued, God was pleased to confirm the authority of Aaron by another miracle. At His command, Moses collected from the prince of each tribe a rod and inscribed the tribe's name upon it. Upon the rod of the tribe of Levi, however, he wrote the name of Aaron. He deposited these rods in the tabernacle before the ark. On the next day, when Moses brought them forth again, it was found that the rod of Aaron had budded and pro-

duced leaves and fruit of almonds, while the other rods remained unchanged. Aaron's rod was laid up in the ark as a memorial.

MORAL LESSONS.—Children, learn early in your youth to be satisfied with your own portion, and be thankful for it. Beware of avarice, envy, and jealousy ; they excite your passions, disturb the peace of your minds, and with it the quiet of your homes too ; they lead to your ruin, and cause grief and sorrow to your parents and friends.

XXV. EVENTS AT KADESH IN THE WILDERNESS OF ZIN.

After a wandering of about thirty-eight years, the children of Israel encamped at Kadesh. Here Miriam died. The people once more suffered from want of water and again, as at former times, they reproached Moses and Aaron. In their distress these prayed to God, and God said to Moses : “ Take thy staff and assemble the congregation, and thou and Aaron speak to the rock in their presence that it shall give forth its water.”

When the people stood assembled, Moses said : “ Hear, ye rebels, shall we out of this rock bring forth water for you ? ” He then lifted up his hand, smote the rock twice with his rod, and the water came out abundantly. Then God said to Moses and Aaron : “ You shall not bring this people into the promised land, because you have not confided in me, to sanctify me before them.”

MORAL LESSONS.—Here, dear children, we learn that even Moses and Aaron, the most faithful servants of God, were not spared correction when they acted in op-

position to the word of God. God is just. Obey a given order to its minutest details.

XXVI. DEATH OF AARON.

Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom, requesting in a kindly and brotherly message his permission to allow the people to pass peaceably through his country. The request being refused, it was determined to take a different road, by which they reached the mount Hor. Here Aaron died, one hundred and twenty-three years old. The people wept and mourned for him thirty days. His son Eleazar was anointed high-priest in his stead. 2487-1462.

MORAL LESSONS.—The animosity of Esau towards his brother seems to have been inherited by his descendants. This is plainly seen in their refusal to allow their brother Israelites to pass through their land, in spite of a friendly request and assurances of peace.

Let us honor the memory of the high-priest Aaron, by heeding the excellent advice of Hillel, who thus depicted his high character :

“Be ye of the disciples of Aaron; loving peace, pursuing peace, loving mankind and bringing them nigh to God’s holy law.”

XXVII. THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

The children of Israel renewed their murmurings against God and Moses. They thought themselves near the termination of their wanderings, when they were

forced by neighboring kings to undertake long and tedious circuits around their countries.

This made them impatient and forgetful of God's fatherly kindness. "There is no bread, no water," said they, "nothing but that loathsome manna. Why have we left Egypt?" God, displeased with their ingratitude and murmurings, sent poisonous serpents, which bit many of them, causing their death. They now acknowledged their wrong, and said: "We have sinned against God and thee; pray for us." And Moses did so.

God said to Moses: "Make a serpent of brass and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh up to it, shall live." Moses complied, and the bite of the serpents no longer proved fatal, since the people looked up to God.

The Israelites took this brazen serpent along into the land of Canaan. After an existence of nine hundred years, it was destroyed by King Hezekiah, because it led the people into idolatry.

MORAL LESSONS.—Here is another illustration of the ingratitude of Israel, the justice of God, and His mercy and forgiveness after repentance. The least inconvenience of the people made them waver in their trust in God, and forgetful of His fatherly love and kindness, as well as of the faithful services of their leader Moses.

XXVIII. BALAAM.

After long, tedious marches, the Israelites encamped by the river Arnon. Sihon, the king of the Amorites, was asked to grant them permission to pass through his land. This was not only refused, but Sihon went forth

with an army to drive them back. The Israelites advanced, routed the Amorites and took possession of their most important places. In the same manner they dealt with Og, the king of Bashan, and his men.

The defeats of Sihon and Og caused great fear to Balak, the king of Moab, regarding his own safety. Upon the counsel of his elders he sent for Balaam, a renowned heathen prophet and sorcerer, to come and curse Israel. But when he refused to go, saying that it was against the will of God, Balak sent other messengers to him, requesting his services under the promise of great honor and reward. Balaam assented upon the condition that he would speak but those words which God might put in his mouth. After some difficulties on his way he arrived, and by his order Balak offered sacrifices on high places which afforded a good view of the camps of the Israelites. Then began Balaam, saying: *"How shall I denounce, whom God has not denounced? and how shall I defy, whom God has not defied? Behold, to bless I have received word, and He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it. How beautiful are thy tents, O Jacob, thy dwellings, O Israel! As streams are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as trees, planted by God, beside the waters. Blessed be they that bless thee, and they that curse thee shall be cursed. Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his."*

Balak could no longer suppress his anger, he struck his hands and said: "Get thee off; I have called thee to curse, and thou hast blessed my enemies. I thought to honor thee, but God has withheld thee from honor." And Balaam replied: "It is as I have said to thy messengers; if Balak would give me his house full of silver

and gold, I could but speak those words which God dictates to me."

Another plan of Balak, likely devised by Balaam, brought many of the Israelites to fall. They followed the call of the daughters of the Moabites, and attended the sacrificial feasts held in honor of their idol Baal Peor.

Moses charged the wiser and better of his men to slay the sinners. By the execution of this order and by the breaking out of a sudden pestilence, twenty-four thousand of them perished. In the midst of this commotion, Zimri, a prince of the tribe of Simeon, came with a Midianitish woman at his side. Pinehas, the son of the priest Elazar, deservedly punished that impudent conduct by slaying both the man and the woman.

Moses thereupon sent twelve thousand men into Midian, who gained a signal victory. Among those who did fall by their swords was also Balaam, the evil counselor.

MORAL LESSONS.—It was a superstitious idea among some ancient heathen nations, as if their saints could effectively pronounce either blessing or curse on others.—Lend not your hand for evil for the sake of honor or reward.—If God is our trust and our guardian, the subtle devices of human wisdom will not harm us.

XXIX. REUBEN, GAD, AND THE HALF TRIBE OF MANASSEH.

The children of Reuben and Gad went to Moses and Eleazar and said: "Behold the land of Sihon and Og,

which God gave into our hands, is so well suited for cattle, that we think it a great advantage to become the possessors thereof. If we have found grace in thine eyes, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession." Moses said to them: "Shall your brethren go to war on the other side of the Jordan without your assistance? Will you, as your fathers did, turn away the heart of your brethren from crossing the Jordan? Remember the just anger of God and His chastisements on that account." Reuben and Gad replied: "Only our families and our herds we intend to leave here and build places for them, but we will go armed with our brethren, and not return until they also shall have taken possession of their portions." And Moses said: "If you will fulfil these conditions, then the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh shall divide among themselves the conquered lands of Sihon and Og." And to the rest of the people Moses made known his instructions received from God concerning the land of Canaan. The inhabitants are to be driven out, so that they might not become a snare, to lead the Israelites to idolatrous practices. The land is to be divided by lots through Eleazar, the priest, and Joshua, assisted by one prince of each tribe. The size of the lots to depend on the number of souls of the various tribes. Forty-eight cities are to be assigned to the Levites, six of which should be cities of refuge, appointed for the protection of those who might accidentally kill a person.

MORAL LESSONS.—Here, dear children, is a good illustration of the doctrine of equal right in the Mosaic law. Let us learn from it, ever to perform our share of the work, and bear our portion of the expense as a member

of the house, school, congregation, or as a citizen of the city or state, whose privileges and protection we enjoy. Reuben and Gad acted in a selfish spirit.

XXX. MOSES' FAREWELL ADDRESS.

When Moses felt that his earthly career was drawing to a close, he assembled his people, and like a loving father addressed them once more. He reviewed the numerous wonderful acts of love and kindness which God did in their behalf. He alluded to their many failings and follies, and to God's great mercy and forgiveness. He warned them against relapsing into evil ways, against following wicked inclinations, and against practicing the idolatrous habits of the surrounding nations. He urged and entreated them to walk in the ways of God, to serve Him alone, and to act in accordance with His commandments.

The fifth book of Moses, dear children, is replete with his sublime exhortations. Among these remember the following:

"See, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, just as the Eternal my God has commanded me. Keep them and do them, fear the Eternal your God, hearken unto His voice, that it may be well with you and your children."—Deut. iv. 5.

"And now, O Israel, what does the Eternal thy God require of thee, but to fear the Eternal thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Eternal thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul."—Deut. x. 12.

“Hear, O Israel! the Eternal our God, the Eternal is One.

“And thou shalt love the Eternal thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”—Deut. vi. 4, 5.

“Beware that thou forget not the Eternal thy God, in not keeping His commandments. . . . Lest when thou hast eaten and art satisfied, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein. . . . and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied ; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Eternal thy God, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”—Deut. viii. 11-14.

“I call the heaven and earth as witnesses against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose ye life for your own sake and for the sake of your children.”—Deut. xxx. 19.

And Moses wrote down these laws and delivered them to the priests, with the instruction to read them to the people when they appear before the Eternal on the Feast of Tabernacle, in the year of release, so that they, their children, and their coming generations may hear and learn to fear the Eternal their God, to walk in His ways and prosper.

XXXI. MOSES' DEATH.

As children listen with tears in their eyes to the trembling voice of a dying parent, so the children of Israel stood spell-bound before their great leader and benefactor Moses. They must have recalled and regretted the many troubles they had heaped upon him ; they must

have remembered his unbounded love, patience, and forbearance; and their profound silence at this solemn hour was decidedly the fittest proof of their feelings. When Moses had concluded, he heard the call of God, "Go up unto this Mount Abarim, the Mount Nebo, that thou mayest be gathered to thy people, even as thy brother Aaron died on Mount Hor."

And how, dear children, might we suppose that Moses received this call of God Almighty? There was surely no sign of anxiety or fear visible upon his face, no motion of excitement or trembling in his figure. The consciousness of a well-spent life in the service of humanity, and in accordance with God's commandments, must have made serene the last moments of his earthly existence. He modestly and collectedly said: "O Eternal, God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint over the congregation a man who may become their leader and their guardian, so that they be not as a flock which have no shepherd." God then informed him, saying: "Joshua be the man, lay thy hand upon him and consecrate him."

Moses then placed Joshua before the priest and the people, and encouraged them to trust and obey their new leader. And to Joshua he said: "Be strong and vigorous, trust in God and obey His law, and thou wilt prosper in all thy undertakings." He then once more and for the last time blessed them all and ascended the mountain. There God granted him a wide view of the blessed land for which he had prepared his people, and of which they should now soon become possessors.

After the enjoyment of this grand sight, he closed his eyes, and his pious soul entered the blissful realms of eternity, awaiting the full reward which God promises to them who live on earth in purity and piety. He had

reached an age of one hundred and twenty years, retaining his energy and vigor to the last moment. His grave, situated in the valley in the land of Moab, remained a secret to men. The Israelites wept and mourned their heavy loss for thirty days. 2488-1461.

MORAL LESSONS.—Thus, dear children, in the sight and on the very borders of the promised land, for which he had undergone so many dangers, had borne so many labors, departed the pious soul of the holy prophet, the great lawgiver and deliverer of Israel. Let us learn from this fact that no one departs from this earthly dwelling-place without leaving unfulfilled many of his dearest wishes, for which he had ardently hoped, longed, and eagerly worked. Let this truth awaken in us the firm resolution not to exhaust our powers in the pursuit of earthly possessions, and thereby neglect our duty toward God, man, and ourselves, and lose the opportunities to labor for our higher destinies.

Though the grave of Moses has remained a secret, his name lives and will remain sacred in our memory, and in that of the world's history. The first part of the Bible, the Torah, subdivided into five books which bear his name, those God-inspired sacred writings, form an everlasting monument of his unsurpassed character, of his sense of justice and kindness, of his fatherly attachment to his people, and his immovable faithfulness to God. May his sublime lessons remain for us and for mankind in general the most precious inheritance, the unfailing guide for a useful, virtuous, and happy life.

“And there arose not a prophet since then in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Eternal knew face to face. In respect to all the signs and the wonders, which

the Eternal had sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and to all his servants, and to all his land. And in respect to all that mighty hand, and in all the terrific deeds which Moses performed before the eyes of all Israel."—Deut xxxiv. 10, 11, 12.

BIBLICAL HISTORY.

PART III.

I. JOSHUA.

[$\frac{2489}{1460} - \frac{2495}{1454}$]

The successor of Moses was Joshua, a son of Nun, from the tribe of Ephraim. God appeared to him, saying: "Rise and lead this people over the Jordan into the promised land. I will be with thee, even as I have been with Moses; I will not let thee fail, nor forsake thee. Be strong and courageous; meditate freely on the law of Moses, that thou mayest fulfill all that is written therein; for then shalt thou be prosperous and successful in all thine undertakings."

Joshua was well fitted for so important a mission. As an attentive and faithful servant of Moses, he improved the excellent opportunities he had to cultivate in his own person the qualities of his great master: his faithfulness and his integrity, his patience and his vigor.

He fought with energy and success against the Amalekites; he accompanied Moses on his ascent of the mountain to receive the two tablets of stone; he awaited him on his return, and was present at that trying moment when he found the people feasting, shouting

and rejoicing over their golden idol. It was Joshua who, on urging Moses to silence the prophesying men, Eldad and Medad, received from him the pacifying reply: "Enviest thou for my sake? Would to God that all the Eternal's people were prophets, and that He, the Eternal, would endow them with His spirit." And again it was Joshua, who, together with Caleb, proved true and faithful to God, by quieting the people and assuring them of God's assistance, when the evil reports of the other ten spies were to the contrary, and caused the Israelites to rebel. Neither did he lack the confidence of the people; for when he reminded the two tribes and a half of their promise given to Moses, and urged them to fulfill it faithfully, they answered: "All that thou hast commanded us, we will do; whithersoever thou wilt send us, we will go; we will hearken unto thy voice, and obey thee, even as we did Moses."

Thus, strengthened by his trust in God, encouraged by the confidence of the people, and possessed by the spirit of Moses, Joshua entered with heart and soul upon his duties as a leader. His first general order through his officers was: "Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you shall pass over the Jordan, to enter the land which God has promised unto your fathers."

OBSERVATIONS.—Let us learn, dear children, from this introduction, that it is important to improve our time and opportunities for our own advancement and for the service of mankind. Let us furthermore be impressed with the truth that the appointments of God and our success are in accordance with our abilities, our moral condition, and our obedience to His laws. It must, therefore, be a great satisfaction to the holder

of an exalted position to know that his advancement comes, by reason of an unblemished and exalted character, from the higher faculties of our nature, and is not tributary to impure means, to favoritism, bribery, political or other degrading influences.

The term "servant," in the Scriptures, is in no way an appellation derogatory to its holder, but, on the contrary, a title of honor. Joshua was the servant of Moses, who was the faithful servant of God; and of Israel God said: "They are my servants." Let us, therefore, respect the title and be continually on our guard not to degrade ourselves or become the servants of the wicked, or the vicious who work evil to mankind.

"For the Eternal, your God, is the God of gods, and the Lord of lords, the great, mighty and terrible God, who regardeth not persons, nor taketh bribes.—Deut. x. 17.

II. THE SPIES.

The first city against which Joshua was to lead his people was Jericho. It was situated on the other side of the river Jordan, and strongly fortified. As a wise general, he thought proper to gather beforehand all the necessary information about the city and its inhabitants. He, therefore, sent two men to spy the place, and to report to him the result of their observations. Their arrival at Jericho, however, became known, and was duly reported to the king. His officers ascertained that the strangers had taken quarters in an inn, kept by Rahab. The kind and God-fearing hostess, apprehending danger to her guests, hid them under the stalks of flax which lay spread upon the roof of her house, and when the officers came there in quest of them, she

said: "There were two men here, I know not from whence they came, and about the time of closing the gates of the city they left; but whither they went, I can not say. In pursuing them hastily, you might overtake them."

After the officers had left in hot pursuit, Rahab went up to the men and said: "I know that the Eternal has given the city into your hands, and that all its inhabitants are in fear and terror of you; for we have heard that the Eternal has dried up the waters of the Red Sea before you, and how you have dealt with Sihon and Og, the two kings across the Jordan. Do now swear unto me by the Eternal that you will deal kindly with my whole family and spare our lives, even as I have saved yours." The men consented, on condition that the whole matter should be kept secret, and that in taking the city, she and her family would remain assembled in her own house, which they would recognize by a scarlet cord hanging from the window. This being understood and agreed upon, Rahab, by means of a rope, let the men down from the window, over the city wall, which was close to her house; they then took shelter in a retired place in the mountains for three days, and thus escaped the sharp eyes of their pursuers. Upon their return to their brethren, they reported their experience to Joshua, and concluded by adding: "God has given the city into our hands; its inhabitants await us with terror."

OBSERVATIONS.—From this story, dear children, we may learn that God is our guardian and protector, in spite of all human watchfulness and precaution to the contrary. His ministering angels are everywhere present for our assistance. Dear children, how often may

your young lives have been in danger, were it not for those loving angels, your parents and friends, who were untiring in their care and generous self-sacrifice in your behalf. Look ever up to God with reverential eyes, open your ever grateful hearts to your parents and to benefactors.

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

“I will say of the Eternal: He is my refuge and my fortress, my God; in him will I trust.

“Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from noisome pestilence.

“He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

“Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. For thou hast (said), The Eternal is my protection, thou hast made the Most High thy habitation.”—Ps. xci.

III. THE CROSSING OF THE JORDAN.

Joshua, encouraged by the favorable report of the spies, gave orders for immediate march. The priests, bearing the ark, were to lead, and the people to follow at a distance of two thousand cubits (or about one thousand yards). On arriving at the banks of the Jordan, they halted, and Joshua in prophetic words addressed them, saying: “Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow God will work wonders in your midst, that you

may know and remember that He is your guide and your assistance."

It now happened that, as soon as the feet of the priests touched the waters of the Jordan, the waters below continued their regular course into the Dead Sea, while those from above heaped up mountains high, and keeping this position, left a wide open passage for the army. The priests, with the ark, now moved forward and rested midway, until the people had reached the opposite shore. Joshua, upon God's special command, now sent twelve men, one from each tribe, to bring twelve stones from the place where the priests stood, to erect a monument, as a memorial of this miraculous event for coming generations. The priests then passed over and joined the people, and when they did so, the waters of the Jordan again pursued their regular course. Joshua and the people then encamped at Gilgal, in the plains of Jericho. Here they celebrated for the first time the Passover or Pesach feast in the promised land, and partook of its produce, and from that time the manna ceased.

IV. THE CAPTURE OF JERICHO.

The Israelites had now firmly set foot upon the promised land. But it did not at once prove to them a land flowing with milk and honey; there was much hard work before them. Canaan was inhabited by many mighty kings, who were not inclined to yield up their possessions. These were only to be obtained after years of trying warfare and after performing prodigies of valor. The Israelites were successful under

their faithful, God-fearing leader in almost all their engagements.

Jericho, a strongly-built and high-walled city, was the first to be attacked. Its inhabitants, though wild and fierce, and ruled by a mighty king, were terror-stricken behind their city gates, at the approach of the Israelites. The mighty acts which their God had performed toward Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and the accounts of His assistance which gave victory to their arms against other mighty kingdoms, had reached their ears, and filled them with fear and awe.

Joshua, according to God's instructions, made daily procession around the city for six successive days. At the head of the army marched a body of warriors, followed by seven priests, blowing their trumpets, succeeded by other priests bearing the ark, and lastly the bulk of the army sounding their trumpets.

On the seventh day, seven such circuits were to be made, and during the last, amidst the roaring of trumpets, a tremendous, deafening battle-cry was raised by the entire army, and the walls of the city tottered and fell. The Israelites, at first bewildered by the unexpected scene, soon threw themselves fiercely upon the awe-stricken opponents, gave them a total overthrow, and slew them even to extirpation. In the midst of this hot, destructive engagement, Joshua failed not to dispatch at once the two spies into the house of Rahab, to protect her and her family, and then issued the following order: "No one shall take anything of the spoil of the city for himself; the gold and silver, as well as the vessels of copper, brass, and iron, shall be delivered into the treasury of the Eternal. The city shall be burned down, never to be rebuilt again. He who

should undertake to rebuild it in spite of this injunction should do it at the risk of the lives of his family. With the loss of his first-born shall he lay the foundation, and amidst the last sighs of his youngest-born will he set up the gates."

Those prohibitions of Joshua were not entirely heeded. Avarice, that dangerous beguiler, deafened the ears of a certain Achan, from the tribe of Judah, and made him take a handsome Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, all of which he secreted under the ground of his tent.

OBSERVATIONS. — From this story, dear children, we may learn that wickedness and sin cause fear and trembling, and that strong, high-walled cities are in the eye of God no protection for a wicked people. And wicked and corrupt the inhabitants of Canaan in general, and the people of Jericho in particular, must have been, when their doom was thus sealed by a benign Providence, whose laws throughout breathe a spirit of love, peace, and good-will to all who confide in Him, and walk in His ways. But the wicked are of no benefit to the world, and from them He withholds His mercy.

V. ACHAN'S PUNISHMENT.—THE FALL OF AI.

The next city upon which Joshua fixed his eyes was Ai, about twelve miles northwest of Jericho. As before, he sent men there to gather the necessary information as to its situation, its inhabitants, and its means of defense. These on their return reported that two or three thousand men would be sufficient to con-

quer the place, so Joshua set out with that number to secure its capture, but was repulsed by the enemy with a loss of about thirty-six men.

Such an unexpected defeat disheartened the Israelites, and their leader, Joshua, rent his clothes and fell upon his face before the Eternal, exclaiming: "O Eternal, God, what shall I say, after the people have turned their backs upon their enemies?" "The Canaanites will hear of it, and will gather their forces to extinguish our name from the earth, and what will Thou do unto Thy great name?"

And God said to Joshua: "Israel has sinned, they have taken of the consecrated spoil and concealed it, I shall not be with them before that wrong is corrected." Joshua now made the customary investigation by means of lots, and it was ascertained that Achan was the guilty party. He confessed his crime, revealed the place where the stolen articles lay hidden and suffered the penalty of death, in the valley of Achor, where a heap of stones marks the place of this sad event even to this day. Joshua then concerted a second attack upon the city of Ai. He sent five thousand men to lie in the ambush beyond the city, while the body of the army marched toward it. The townsmen, on beholding them, rushed eagerly out to meet them. The Israelites, according to a previous understanding, fled before them, thus by stratagem leading the enemy a great distance from the city. At a given sign, the men in ambush entered the vacated city, set it on fire, and then pushed on to throw themselves upon the pursuing enemy. At this moment Joshua ordered his men to face about, and thus having inclosed the enemy between both divisions of his men, totally routed them.

The spoil of Ai was left to the warriors, but the city itself was laid in ashes.

To crown his victory, Joshua erected an altar upon the Mt. Ebal, of unhewn stones, and offered sacrifices thereon, in gratitude to the Lord of Hosts, and upon these stones he wrote a copy of the law of Moses. He then ordered the people to form two divisions, so that the priests and Levites with the ark could take stand between them. While one portion was facing Mt. Gerisim, and the other Mt. Ebal, the blessings and the curses for obedience and disobedience were pronounced in a loud voice, as they are written in the law of Moses, to each of which the people responded: "Amen." Joshua thus proved himself a willing and an obedient observer of his great master Moses, whose laws and ordinances were his sole guide, and which he eagerly tried to impress anew upon the minds of the people on every occasion.

OBSERVATIONS. — Avarice is a consuming vice. It sacrifices *principles, prosperity, health and life*. Stolen goods never prosper. In reflecting upon the disappointment and misfortune which befell a whole army on account of an individual, we become convinced of the danger which one bad, unprincipled man is apt to cause in society, or one bad pupil in a school. It is, therefore, imperative to shun their companionship, and even to ostracize them for the public welfare. And there is still another important lesson to be drawn from this instance. Our sages have made the telling remark: "All Israelites are bound to each other," that is, are responsible for each other. It is a fact which has been proven again and again, that our adversaries are too willing to charge our entire race with the

shortcomings or crimes of which one of its individuals has been found guilty. It must, therefore, be our sacred duty to guard ourselves against the performance of any illegal, mean or unholy act, and on the contrary to cultivate our sense of justice and righteousness, to practice truth, honesty and every other virtue, and to shun and abhor each and every occasion of vice. For then, and only then, do we act in the spirit of the holy law, and live up to our mission to sanctify God's holy name before the world at large. And from Joshua let us learn to ascribe our success not altogether to our own wisdom and strength, but to a higher power, to God alone, to whom our gratitude and praise are due forever.

“My son, if sinners will entice thee, consent thou not. If they should say: ‘Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, let us watch in concealment for the innocent without cause. Let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and the perfect as those that go down into the pit. We shall find all precious substance, we will fill our houses with spoil. Cast thy lot in our midst, let us all have one purse.’ My son, walk thou not in the way with them, withhold thy foot from their path, for their feet run after evil, and they make haste to shed blood. Such are the ways of every one that is greedy after unlawful gain, it taketh the life of the owners thereof.”—Prov. i. 10-20.

VI. THE GIBEONITES.

The reports of the fall and ruin of two of the most important cities of Canaan had spread far and wide throughout the country, and filled its people with terror.

Instead of offering peace and submission, five kings, headed by Adoni-Zedek, King of Jerusalem, resolved to unite their armies for resistance.

The inhabitants of Gibeon, a city on a hill north of Jerusalem, refused to join the confederacy. They prudently foresaw the folly of a war with a people so favored by God Almighty, and in order to be saved and to enjoy peace, they had resource to a cunning stratagem. They sent a deputation clad in ragged garments, and provided with old vessels for water and mouldy provisions, to Joshua, with these words: "We come from a distant country. These our clothes and our vessels were new, and our provisions fresh, when we left home. We have heard of the great name and power of your God, and we are sent by our elders to make peace with you and to become your servants." Joshua at first distrusted them, but he neglected to ask God's counsel, looking only at their way-worn aspect and stale victuals, he was imposed upon, and made peace with them, which was at once ratified by the elders by an oath. Then, in observance of an ancient sign of amity, the Israelites partook of their victuals, and the men departed.

After three days the Israelites reached the country of the Hivites, where the Gibeonites dwelt, and learned that they acted deceitfully. On being reproached by Joshua, they said: "We had been informed that God promised Moses to utterly destroy the inhabitants of Canaan, and to give their land to the children of Israel. Do now with us that which seemeth good in thine eyes." The Israelites, true to the oath of their elders, spared the lives of the Gibeonites, but made them hewers of wood and drawers of water forever.

OBSERVATIONS.—From this story we may learn not to act under false pretences, nor to be easily imposed upon, and above all to be true to a given promise. Our wise men say: “Let thy yes be yes, and thy no, no.”

“That which is gone out of thy lips, thou shalt keep and perform.”—Deut. xxiii. 24.

“Thou shalt not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God.”—Lev. xix. 12.

VII. THE CONFEDERATE ARMIES.

The treaty of peace with the Gibeonites, one of the mightiest people of Canaan, with the Israelites, soon reached the ears of Adoni-Zedek, King of Jerusalem, who at once sent word to his associated kings to move forward, lay siege to Gibeon, and smite its people, while on their part the Gibeonites sent a message to Joshua asking his assistance. Joshua promptly led his men against the united forces of the enemy, smote them, and put them to flight. A fierce hailstorm surprised the retreating armies, and a large number of their men were stricken down by hailstones of an extraordinary size.

The day was far advanced when Joshua, anxious to complete his victory, and to deal such an effective blow to the enemy as to prevent them from rallying next day, exclaimed in the hearing of his men: “Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon!” And his words, spoken, no doubt, with the faith of Abraham in God’s promise, were not spoken in vain. The sun did not set, nor did the moon appear to move, ere Joshua had utterly defeated the united armies. The five kings, in their flight, took shelter in a cave, of which Joshua, being advised,

ordered some of his men to roll large stones before its entrance, and to watch it during the night. On the next day they were sentenced to be hanged, and before night they were buried in the same cave.

VIII. THE WARFARE AGAINST THE CANAANITES CONTINUED.

Joshua, encouraged by the success of his arms, now reduced in succession the greater part of the country south of Gibeon, the possessions of seven other kings, and slew them and their hosts. Jabin, King of Hazor, in the northern part of Palestine, now sent messengers to the neighboring kings to unite their forces and make war against Israel. In obedience to this call, they came forth with an immense army and encamped at the waters of Merom.

At this great juncture, God appeared to Joshua and said to him: "Fear them not, for by to-morrow about this time I shall have delivered them into thy hands." Joshua, strengthened by this new promise of victory, moved forward with his entire army, and succeeded by rapid marches to surprise the enemy and to effect their complete overthrow.

OBSERVATIONS. — Trust in God, combined with energy, prudence and caution, increases our courage and strength and leads to success. The enthusiasm of a skilled leader in the service of a just cause inspires his subordinates, and even nature seems to obey his command.

"There is no king saved by the multitude of hosts; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. A horse is a vain thing for safety; neither shall he deliver

any by his great strength. Behold the eye of the Eternal is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his kindness. To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the Eternal; he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O Eternal, be upon us, according as we hope in thee."—Ps. xxxiii. 16-22.

IX. JOSHUA DISTRIBUTES THE CONQUERED LAND AMONG THE NINE TRIBES AND A HALF.

Joshua, by the might of God's arm, bore down all before him. Victory attended him wherever he turned his arms; and every day was signalized by some new conquest. In six years Joshua had conquered no less than thirty-one kings, none of whom was inclined to offer peace to him. There remained yet several unconquered districts; but God said to Joshua: "Thou art old, divide therefore the land among the nine tribes and a half." Joshua and Elazar, the high-priest, assisted by the prince of each tribe, made the division by lot, thus designating the situation of each one's portion. They observed so impartial an equity toward each tribe, in accordance with numbers, that there was no cause left either for censure or complaint.

Joshua, in accordance with the command of God, now requested the people to designate six cities of refuge for the safety of those who might accidentally kill any one.

The cities Kadesh in Galilee, in the Mountain of Naphtali, Shechem in the Mount of Ephraim, and

Hebron in the Mount of Juda, were thus appointed in accordance with that purpose on this side of the Jordan; and Bezer in the wilderness, out of the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead, out of the tribe of Gad, and Galon in Bashan, out of the tribe of Manasseh, on the other side of the Jordan.

(NOTE.—For the better understanding of this ordinance, I would advise the teacher to read for his class, chapter xxxv. of Numbers in connection with chapter xx. of Joshua, from which the strictly just and liberal spirit of the Mosaic law clearly appears.)

The heads of the tribe of Levi now applied to Joshua and Elazar, for cities for that tribe, and places for their cattle. According to the law of Moses, they were not to receive separate districts as the other tribes did (the service of God and his sacrifices being their inheritance), but were to live in forty-two cities, besides those six cities of refuge, situated among the various tribes.

Joshua assigned those cities by lot, and thus completed his task to the satisfaction of the whole people.

X. THE RETURN OF REUBEN, GAD, AND HALF THE TRIBE OF MANASSEH.

Joshua, after the successful completion of his task, and when quiet reigned round about him, summoned the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, to send them home in peace to their quarters. He said to them: "You have faithfully carried out the promises which you have made to Moses and myself. You enjoy the pleasure of seeing your brethren fairly settled, and it is now my pleasant duty to permit

you to return to your homes. Continue in the future as in the past to practice obedience to the law of Moses : love the Eternal your God, walk in His ways, and serve Him with all your hearts and with all your souls." Joshua thereupon blessed them and they departed.

At their arrival at the borders of the Jordan they erected a large altar for a show. But no sooner had their brethren, the children of Israel, heard of it, than they assembled at Shiloh to pursue them and to make war against them. But upon second thought they concluded to investigate the matter more fully, and with this intention sent Pinehas and ten princes to inquire into the particulars of this supposed trespass. On reaching them they said : " Thus saith the whole congregation of the Eternal, ' What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from the Eternal in building you an altar ? ' If you consider the land which you possess unclean, then come over to us, and we will share our portions with you ; but rebel not against the Eternal, our God." The accused, after having quietly listened, now answered : " The Eternal God knoweth, and Israel shall know, that we have not built this altar in rebellion against our God, but as a memorial and protection to our children against yours, should they at some future time challenge the right of our children to the covenant between God and Israel." This explanation gave entire satisfaction to Pinehas and his associates, and their favorable report on their return pleased the whole congregation of Israel.

OBSERVATIONS.—From this story, dear children, let us be warned against being imposed upon ourselves and against our imposing on others on mere report.

Let us not be too hasty in our conclusions and judgments, but act thoughtfully and only after proper investigation. How many tortures could have been prevented, how many innocent lives would have been spared in centuries past, had the enemies of the Israelites acted in the spirit of the law of Moses, which even in criminal cases does not convict upon the testimony of but one witness. How much enmity and hatred would cease to exist were the people in our own time governed by that wise dispensation. Beware, children, of too hasty actions, and the more so if you are in an excited mood. Make it the rule of your life to think and consider first, and act afterwards. Follow the golden maxim of that wise man : " If you are vexed, count slowly seven ; if very angry, count fourteen."

XI. JOSHUA'S LAST WORDS TO HIS PEOPLE.

Joshua had enjoyed for many years the much-needed rest for his age, at Timnath Serah, in Mt. Ephraim, which place the Israelites had assigned to him. When he felt old age fast approaching, he assembled all the Israelites, and spoke to them words of love and exhortation. After recounting the mighty and wondrous acts which God had performed for them, as well as the faithful fulfillment of the promises made to their fathers and to themselves, he said : " Fear, therefore, the Eternal, and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and know ye that He is a holy God, and His judgments are in accordance with perfect justice. If you should forsake Him and turn aside from His ways, then He would deal evil to you in the measure that He has done you good."

And the people answered as with one voice: "The Eternal our God we will serve, and unto His voice we will hearken."

In memory of this promise, Joshua made a covenant with the people, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. He wrote these words in the book of the law of God, set up a great stone as a witness, and dismissed them with his blessing.

He lived to the age of one hundred and ten years, when his pious soul departed, and his remains were deposited at Timnath Serah, the place of his inheritance.

The resting-place of the bones of Joseph was Shechem, which Jacob had bought of the sons of Hamar, the father of Shechem.

OBSERVATIONS. — From this story we may learn that the evening of the life of the pious is full of serenity and peace, and their parting words are to us as lasting blessings. Children, let us ever act our part so well that we, too, shall, through our good conduct and our intellectual improvements, cause our parents and teachers to enjoy the latter years of their earthly existence, so that we may justly merit their final blessings.

XII. THE JUDGES.

After the death of Joshua, the elders looked after the worldly and spiritual affairs of the people. The Israelites remained true to the promise given to Joshua, and walked in the ways of God. But when the elders were gathered to their fathers, and the descendants of the people formed the congregation of Israel, they soon forsook the God of their fathers. They intermarried

with the heathen nations who were left in Canaan, followed their evil idolatrous practices, and served Baalim and Ashtaroth — images of heathen deities. Such sinful conduct displeased God. He from time to time withdrew His protecting arm from them, and at intervals allowed their oppressors to prey upon them. When these oppressions became almost insufferable, the Israelites began to bewail their follies, acknowledged their departure from the path of virtue, cried unto the God of their fathers, and prayed for His guidance and assistance. It was at such times that God in His mercy heard the fervent supplications of his people, and was pleased to receive them again with favor. He then inspired the most trustworthy and daring men among them to rise and make a stand against the enemy; and their efforts, through His interposition and assistance, were usually crowned with complete success, and their arms were victorious. These God-inspired men became the chosen Judges of the people, and their office it was to lead the people in time of war, and in times of peace to judge their private affairs and direct their internal and external policy.

XIII. OTHNIEL, EHUD AND SHAMGAR.

$$\left[\frac{2516}{1433}, \quad \frac{2574}{1375}, \quad \frac{2574}{1375} \right].$$

Kushan Rishathayim, King, of Mesopotamia, was the first in this period whose oppressions for eight years the Israelites sorely felt through all their borders. Othniel, a nephew of Caleb, relieved them from servitude, and during his rule quiet reigned in the land for forty years.

Eglon, the King of Moab, was the second who waged

war against them, and made them tributary for eighteen years. God heard their cries and saw their affliction, and inspired Ehud as their judge to free them from oppression. Though lamed in his right hand, he did not lack either courage or valor. While delivering a present to the king, he at the same time pretended to have a secret message to him, and thus securing a private interview, he assassinated the king, and succeeded in leaving the palace undetected. Ehud then gathered all his available warriors and made war against the Moabites, who, humbled by the loss of their king, were utterly defeated. During the reign of this judge Israel enjoyed quiet for eighty years. Another judge in Israel was Shamgar, who was a man of great valor, and it is reported of him that he slew in one encounter with the Philistines six hundred of them with an ox-goad.

XIV. DEBORAH.

[$\frac{2634}{1315}$.]

The many hardships and oppressions which the Israelites had to endure from the Canaanites, on account of their infidelity to the laws of God, and the untiring willingness of God to hear their cries and to deliver them through their courageous judges, had by no means the effect of causing them to adhere faithfully to the teachings of Moses and Joshua. They again and again sinned against God, and had to suffer anew each time the consequences of their bad conduct and broken faith. It was now that they groaned for full twenty years under the iron yoke of Jabin, the mighty king of northern Canaan, who resided at Hazor.

Deborah, the prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was

judging Israel about this time under a palm-tree. On beholding the cruelties of the invaders and the sufferings of her people, she perceived within her the voice of God, saying: "Go and fight the enemy, and I will deliver him into thy hands." She thereupon ordered Barak, a brave warrior of the tribe of Naphtali, to march at the head of ten thousand men toward the enemy, for the relief of her people. On refusing to go without her, she accompanied him, and God lent victory to their arms. A panic caused by a fierce storm spread a general confusion throughout the opposing ranks, commanded by Sisera, and contributed to the complete destruction of his army. Sisera alighted from his chariot, fled on foot, and reached in an exhausted condition the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, who kindly invited him to enter.

After partaking of some milk, which his hostess had given him, he laid himself down on the ground, and ere he closed his eyes in sleep, he prayed that she may faithfully preserve the secret of his concealment, Jael, however, betrayed her trust; for when Sisera was fast asleep, she cruelly slew him with her own hand. When Barak, in his pursuit, came in sight, she prided herself of her murderous deed, saying: "Come in, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest." Thus Israel was freed on that day from an overwhelming enemy, and was permitted to enjoy once more an uninterrupted peace for forty years. Deborah, the prophetess, and Barak, her general, celebrated their gratitude to God for His kind and wondrous assistance in a song which strongly manifests the divine inspiration. (Judges v.)

OBSERVATIONS.—In Deborah, dear children, we have a glorious example of what women in Israel are capa-

ble of performing, if possessed by the true spirit of God. Through her influence, Israel returned to the observance of the law, she raised the drooping spirit of her nation, and inspired it to make a stand against the enemy. She not only directed the operations of war, but marched with Barak at the head of the army and led it to victory. Would that the mothers in Israel in our own days were inspired by such noble, heroic conduct, to lend their influence and assistance in conquering the existing apathy and indifference toward religion, and in breathing new life into their sons and daughters, to lead, in accordance with our sacred religion, a life of purity and holiness.

The conduct of Jael toward Sisera is not apt to impress us favorably. Her deed was anything but womanly. Aroused by the heroic achievements of Deborah, and probably eager to become famous herself, she was led to commit an act of treachery that, though done in time of war, can not but fill us with horror.

“If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldst forbear to unload him, thou dost not fulfill the law—thou shalt surely help him.”—Ex. xxiii. 5.

“When thine enemy falleth, frolic thou not; and when he staggereth, thou shalt not rejoice.”

XV. GIDEON.

[²⁶⁸¹₁₂₆₈.]

The numerous proofs of God's power, mercy and kindness did not prevent the Israelites from again disobeying His holy will. Severe sufferings only seemed to set their follies vividly before their eyes, and to

awaken them to repentance. Such was also the case in the days of Gideon. The Israelites, who had again estranged themselves from the God of their fathers, were now held down by the force of the Midianites. During seven long years these were accustomed to come at harvest time into the land of the Israelites to devastate their fields and vineyards, and to carry off their cattle. Impoverished, and in constant anxiety and fear, they cried unto God from their hiding places, and their cries were heard.

An angel of God appeared to Gideon, the son of Joas, while he was threshing some wheat in a concealed place, and said to him: "God be with thee, thou mighty hero!" Gideon replied, "Were God with us, would we thus suffer the persecutions of the Midianites? God has forsaken us." The angel replied: "Get ready, for thou shalt deliver the people from their enemies." The modest Gideon rejoined: "How shall I save Israel? My family is one of the poorest in Manessah, and I am the youngest in my father's house." But the angel repeated: "God will be with thee." Gideon, in the gratitude of his heart, prepared an offering and placed it upon a rock near by. The angel touched it with his staff, and fire came forth from the rock and consumed the offering. When the astounded Gideon looked up again, God's messenger had disappeared.

Gideon, in his meditations during the following night, perceived in his heart the call of God to destroy the altar and the grove of Baal which belonged to his father. At once he rose, and with ten of his servants accomplished the work of destruction. This caused astonishment among the people the next morning; and

when they learned that Gideon had done the mischief, they demanded that Joash should deliver up his son to them. But Joash, suddenly possessed of a better spirit, replied: "Will you indeed contend for Baal? If he be a god, let him contend for himself." This terse reply had a good effect upon the enraged people; they, too, saw their folly, felt abashed, and dispersed in a better disposition of mind. This heroic deed of Gideon caused him to be surnamed "Jerubbaal," which means: "Let Baal contend against him."

XVI. GIDEON'S VICTORY.

The Midianites and some other nation now united their hosts to wage war against Israel. Gideon also on his part called together a large army from the various tribes to resist the advance of the enemy. Gideon now committed himself to the keeping of God, and thus besought him for a sign of His divine favor: "O God, if it be Thy will to save Israel through my hands, let it come to pass that the fleece which I am spreading here this night be moistened with the descending dew, while the earth around it remain dry." On the next morning Gideon pressed a cup full of water from the fleece which he had spread, while the earth around it remained dry. Gideon once more prayed to God, saying: "Be not angry, O my God, if I ask another sign of Thee. This time let the fleece remain dry, and the earth be moistened by the dew." And on the next morning he found it so. Encouraged by these two signs, Gideon, having reviewed his army, and finding that it numbered thirty-two thousand men, perceived within himself the voice of God, saying: "These are

too many: they might glorify themselves and say: "Our own strength has saved us." Gideon thereupon proclaimed: "Whoever is afraid, let him return to his home:" and upon this exhortation twenty-two thousand men left the army and returned to their homes. "Yet too many," resounded the voice of God in Gideon's ear. So he brought them down to the water, and separated those who fell down on their knees to drink from those who remained standing and drinking in the water from the hollows of their hands. Of the latter there were but three hundred; and these he reserved for action. The following night, while Gideon and his servant Purah were making a survey of the outskirts of the enemy's camp, they overheard a man thus speaking to his companion: "I saw in my dream a cake of barley-bread rolling into the camp of Midian and upsetting it." And the man so addressed said: "This is nothing else than the sword of Gideon, into whose hands God has delivered the camp of Midian." Gideon, after thanking God for this new sign of His favor, hastened back to his small army, and divided it into three sections. He bade them to provide themselves with trumpets and torches in empty pitchers, and follow him.

They now marched silently toward the enemy's camp, surrounded it, and at the given sign sounded their trumpets and broke their pitchers, shouting the battle-cry of Israel: "The sword of the Eternal and of Gideon!"

The terrified enemy, imagining their entire camp to be on fire, and that it was completely surrounded by an overwhelming army, were bewildered, and in their fury struck down their own men, and fled in utter dismay.

being fiercely pursued by Gideon and his chosen warriors. Gideon at the same time ordered the men whom he had at first dismissed to join in the pursuit of the enemy, and through special messengers sent similar orders to the Ephraimites, all of whom obeyed his call, and thus Midian was hopelessly routed, and its two princes, Oreb and Zeeb, were slain.

The men of Ephraim felt somewhat slighted for not having been allowed to participate in the earlier part of the engagement, and gave vent to their feelings in loud reproaches against Gideon. But he modestly replied: "Is not the gleanings of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? Into your hand God has delivered the two princes, Oreb and Zeeb, and what are my deeds in comparison with yours?" By these modest words of a wise leader the anger of the Ephraimites was appeased, and they, too, rejoiced as in a common victory for all. The inhabitants of Sukkoth and Penuel, who refused refreshments to the fatigued soldiers of Gideon when in their pursuit of the enemy, were severely dealt with; and Israel, thus relieved from a fierce and powerful enemy, enjoyed a prosperous peace of forty years. In their gratitude to Gideon, they offered to make him their king, but he refused the honor, and said: "Neither I nor any of my sons shall reign over you; let God only be your king!" One request, however, Gideon could not restrain himself from making. He asked the people for the golden rings which they had taken from the Ishmaelites, and on receiving them, he caused an ephod to be made, which he richly decorated with these rings. But that ephod, at first intended as an honor to God, became afterward

a snare to his family, and led the people to idolatrous practices.

OBSERVATIONS. — From these Biblical stories, dear children, we may learn that God is just, omnipresent and omniscient, merciful, kind, wise and mighty. He forsakes only those who forsake Him. He is easily found; He hears the cries of the suffering, and accepts the prayers of those who faithfully promise obedience, and who return to His ways. He selects a leader suitable to the occasion, and overthrows mighty hosts even by a seemingly insignificant force. From Gideon also we may learn that we should be cautious and should satisfy ourselves fully as to the truth even of heavenly messages; that we should be modest, and yet expunge fearlessly the root of existing evils; that we should be careful in the selection of men for important undertakings; and should meet and appease just reproaches with patience and moderation.

“A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.”—Prov. xv. 1.

XVII. THE DEATH OF GIDEON. — ABIME- LECH.

After a rule of forty years, Gideon died at a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father, in Ophrah. After his death the Israelites again returned to their idolatrous ways, made themselves the idol Baal-Berith, and served it as a God. Nor did they prove true and thankful to the house of Gideon, but allowed themselves to be deceitfully persuaded to sanction by their choice a most cruel and unmerited deed.

Gideon had by his many wives seventy sons, and by

a concubine another one, whose name was Abimelech, who was a most greedy, vile and detestable character. In order to secure for himself supremacy over the people, he went among his own relations, saying: "Pray speak to the people and ask them which do you prefer to be ruled by: the seventy sons of Gideon, or that only one of his sons should be your ruler?" The Israelites, thus addressed, decided in favor of Abimelech, and made him at once a present of seventy silver pieces out of the treasury of the Baal-Berith temple. And with this money he hired some low and desperate men, went with them to Ophrah, and slew all his brethren except the youngest one, Jotham, who had succeeded in hiding himself. After this horrible slaughter, the Israelites made Abimelech their king. Jotham, on hearing it, went up to the mountain Gerizim, and with a loud voice addressed the people in the following manner:

"Hearken unto me, ye men of Schechem, that God may hearken unto you! The trees once went forth to anoint a king over themselves, and they said to the olive-tree, 'Reign thou over us.' But the olive-tree replied, 'Should I give up my fatness, wherewith God and man is honored, for the sake of becoming a ruler over the trees?' They then offered the crown to the fig-tree, but with no better result; for the fig-tree answered, 'Should I leave my sweetness and my good fruit for the sake of a crown?'

"The vine was next asked to become their king, and he also declined the offer, saying, 'Should I leave my wine, which rejoices God and men, and become ruler over the trees?' Thus having met with a refusal from the most important trees, they at last went to the bram-

ble, and asked him to become their king. And the bramble said, 'If in truth you anoint me king over you, then come and trust yourselves under my shadow; and if not let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'” After having depicted in this parable the character of the people and Abimelech, Jotham continued: “If you have dealt fairly and justly with Gideon, in return for all that he has done for you, then you may rejoice to-day with Abimelech; but if not, then shall the fire of hatred and strife arising among you consume both him and you.” After this, Jotham fled, and hid himself at Beer to avoid the wrath of Abimelech.

XVIII. THE FINAL FATE OF ABIMELECH.

The words of Jotham failed not to make a deep impression upon the inhabitants of Schechem. The wickedness of their king, and their own injustice to the house of Gideon, arose vividly before their eyes, and they soon began openly to despise Abimelech and his abominable rule. They ordered men to lie in wait for him on the tops of the mountains, and made the roads quite unsafe, for they robbed all who came in their way.

A man named Gaal, very likely sent by Abimelech to watch events, took the part of the people of Schechem, and thus gaining their confidence, added fuel to the rebellious spirit of the people. Zebul, an officer of the king at Schechem, advised him of the existing state of affairs, and Abimelech came with a large army, slew many of the people, and destroyed the city. Some of the inhabitants who had taken shelter in a large wooden tower,

perished therein by fire and smoke, which Abimelech and his men had caused by setting it on fire. He then took his way toward another tower, into which also many had fled for safety, in order to set it too on fire. But, as he approached the place, a woman from the top of the tower rolled down a huge millstone, which, falling on him, fractured his skull. Abimelech in his death agony said to his armor-bearer: "Draw thou thy sword and slay me, that it may not be said, 'By a woman he was slain;'" and his last commands were carried out in obedience to his will.

"He that diggeth a pit for the ruin of others, will himself perish in its depths."—Ps. vii. 16.

"He that soweth iniquity will reap vanity, and the rod of his anger shall fail."—Prov. xxii. 8.

OBSERVATIONS. — In these chapters, dear children, we have the sad example of a wicked wretch, whose greed and vanity became his destruction. Beware of these vices. Those who join hands with the wicked will surely feel their oppressions and share their fate, for God in His justice ever deals with men in accordance with their deserts.

XIX. JEPHTHAH.

After the death of Abimelech there arose in Israel two judges, whose achievements must have been very insignificant, for history only records the duration of their rule. Thola, a man of Issachar, judged the people twenty-three years; and Jair, a Gileadite, twenty-two years. The children of Israel relaxed again in the worship of the true and only God, and bowed to the idols of the surrounding nations. They, however, soon

felt the severe oppressions of the very nations in whose gods they confided. The Philistines and the Ammonites sorely oppressed them on both sides of the Jordan for eighteen years.

In their distress they now raised their eyes and their sorrow-stricken hearts to Him with whom alone there is power and victory; they repented their misdeeds, and God had compassion on them. Such a change for the better awakened nobler aspirations, and encouraged them anew to meet the enemy once more. While the Ammonites lay encamped in Gilead, the princes and the people of Israel met to consider who was the fittest man to be intrusted with the leadership of their forces. They all agreed that Jephthah, the Gileadite, a mighty and valorous man, was the most suitable for the post. They had, however, serious doubts as to his ready acceptance, because his brothers formerly drove him away from their father's house, he being but their step-brother. But Jephthah, after some hesitation and bitter remonstrances, accepted the call communicated to him through messengers, and soon followed them. He now sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites, instructed with these words of peace: "By what right dost thou make war against Israel? We have taken nothing either from Moab or from Ammon. We hold the land which our God has given to us, may you not be satisfied with the portion which Chemosh, your god, has given you? Let God judge between us."

This appeal being in vain, Jephthah thereupon arrayed his forces, and before starting toward the enemy, he made the following vow: "If thou, O Eternal, wilt deliver the Ammonites into my hands, and I shall return

in peace, then shall that, which cometh out from my house to meet me, be a sacrifice to the Eternal."

Jephthah gained a complete victory over the enemy; but his enthusiasm in making a vow caused him deep sorrow and grief; for it was his only daughter, indeed his only child, who singing and rejoicing, met the victorious father on his return from the field. On perceiving the sadness of her father, and learning its cause, the good daughter said: "Father, do as thou hast vowed." Another deplorable incident after this war was that which Jephthah undertook against the Ephraimites.

That tribe, possessed of a discontented, revolutionary spirit, reproached Jephthah, as they formerly did Gideon, and even threatened him to burn his house to revenge themselves for not having been called upon to join in the action against the Ammonites. But Jephthah was not that character, nor was he in the mood to listen calmly to the unreasonable threatening outbursts of a refractory tribe. He made war against the Ephraimites and punished them with great rigor. Many of them fled in various directions, but were pursued and put to the sword. Others tried to save their lives by denying their tribe, but they did not succeed in deceiving their keen pursuers, for they were made to pronounce the word "Shiboleth," which that tribe regularly pronounced "Siboleth," and were thus found out and denied quarter. It is recorded that forty-two thousand Ephraimites suffered death in this needless revolt. Jephthah ruled the people for six years, and the three succeeding judges, Ibzon, Elon and Abdon, ruled seven, ten and eight years respectively over Israel.

OBSERVATIONS.—From this chapter we may learn, 1st, not to despise any one on account of his birth, for even the most lowly-born may grow up a man of great valor and wisdom, of whose counsel and assistance we may at some time stand in utter need; 2d, not to be hasty in our utterances, or in making promises; and 3d, to suppress early in our lives the spirit of discontent, fault-finding and opposition.

“Be not hasty with thy tongue, and let not thy heart be rash to utter any word before God; for God is in heaven as the Judge, and thou art upon earth as his creature, therefore let thy words be discreet and few.”
—Ecc. v. 1.

XX. SAMSON.

Another renowned judge in Israel was Samson. He was surnamed “The Mighty” on account of his extraordinary strength. He delivered Israel and protected it from the oppressions of the Philistines. The history of Samson’s entire life is full of interesting events, which the holy Scriptures record as follows:

The Israelites had again displeased God through a sinful conduct, and He had withdrawn His favor from them.

He suffered them to be subjected to the oppressive rule of the Philistines, very troublesome neighbors in the southwest of Canaan. For forty long years the Israelites had groaned under the cruelties and persecutions of this enemy, when at last they awakened to their duty and prostrated themselves before the true God and implored His forgiveness and assistance. And He, ever merciful, accepted their prayers.

There was about that time in Israel a pious man of

the tribe of Dan, named Manoah, who lived with his wife at Zorah, near the frontier. Being without children, it was their ardent desire to have a son who could fight the Philistines, subdue them, and make Israel free.

One day, an angel of God appeared to the woman, and said to her: "God will bless thee with a son, who shall deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines. He shall be a Nazarite of God, and as such he must abstain from any strong drinks, and from any unclean food, and a razor must not touch his head." The woman hastened joyously to Manoah, and after he had attentively listened to her story, he prayed: "O Eternal, do send the man again, that I also may hear his voice." And God heard Manoah's prayer. The angel of God again appeared and repeated his message, and his instructions to both of them.

Manoah now invited the man to a repast, and having met with a refusal, he sacrificed a burnt-offering unto the Eternal. And as the flames ascended heavenward, the man disappeared. Manoah and his wife, now convinced that an angel of God had spoken to them, prostrated themselves before the Almighty and raised prayers of gratitude to His throne. After some time the promised son was born to them, and the happy parents named him Samson.

XXI. SAMSON'S ADVENTURES.

Samson grew up under the care of his parents, and at the age of manhood manifested an unrelenting will, a high degree of daring, and extraordinary physical strength. At Thimnatha, a place southwest of Zorah, he

saw one of the daughters of the Philistines, whom he favored, and he asked his parents to secure her for him as a wife. They, however, displeased with his choice, said to him: "Is there no woman among the daughters of thy brethren, that thou wouldst marry one of the Philistines?" But Samson, persisting in his demand, finally received their consent. On his way to Thimnatha, he was surprised by a lion, which came from the vineyards of that place against him. He at once boldly grasped at the ferocious beast, and with his bare hands tore it, as if it were a kid. Without a sign of excitement he then visited her to whom he was to be betrothed, and was successful in accomplishing his object. After a time Samson, accompanied by his parents, went again to Thimnatha to celebrate his wedding, and as he passed by the place where he had killed the lion, to his great surprise he found bees and honey in its carcass. He ate of the honey, and gave some to his parents, who also ate thereof, without knowing whence it was taken. During the wedding festival, Samson said to the thirty Philistine guests who attended it: "I will give you a riddle; if you can solve it within seven days, I shall give you thirty shirts and thirty garments, and if you can not, then you shall give me that amount of clothing." The Philistines said: "Be it so; let us hear thy riddle." And Samson thus propounded it: "Out of the eater came forth food, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. This is the riddle."

The Philistines seriously meditated for several days, but without result. They grew more and more impatient with every day, until at last, excited and angry, they threatened Samson's bride to burn her with her father's house, if she should fail to assist them. The

frightened woman succeeded in eliciting from her husband the desired solution, and made it known to her guests. At the appointed hour they shouted: "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than the lion?" Samson replied: "If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle." He then went down to Ashkelon, one of the cities of the Philistines, slew thirty men, stripped them, and took their garments to the wedding guests, and shortly thereafter he departed with his parents in an angry mood, leaving his wife for a time in her father's house.

XXII. SAMSON'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE PHILISTINES.

About the time of the wheat harvest, Samson went to Thimnatha to look after his wife. Instead of meeting her, he was met by her father, who informed him that believing Samson hated his daughter, he had remarried her to another man, and offered him in her place his younger daughter. Samson at once thought of severe revenge. He went and caught three hundred foxes, tied the tails of every couple together, and then fastened torches to them, and having set them on fire, he chased the frightened animals into the cornfields and vineyards of the Philistines, and thereby destroyed their entire harvest.

The Philistines, on inquiry, soon found out by whom and for what reason that damaging mischief was done, and they burnt the father-in-law and the wife of Samson with their house. To avenge this cruel act, Samson threw himself fiercely upon the Philistines, made fearful havoc among them, and then went down and tarried

in the large cave of Etham, in the district of Judah, while the Philistines in their pursuit, encamped in Judea, waiting for an opportunity to lay hold on him. The men of Judah, afraid of war, sent three thousand men to the cave of Etham, to bind Samson, and to deliver him unto his enemies. But Samson said to them: "Swear unto me that you will not kill me, and I will allow you to bind me," and the men of Judah consented to this condition. They then fastened two new ropes around his body, hands, arms and shoulders, and brought him out of the cave. When the Philistines saw him in such a helpless state, they shouted with joy and considered their giant foe within their power. But at this instant Samson felt himself anew possessed by the spirit of God, and tore off the ropes, as if they were threads touched by fire, and picking up the fresh jaw-bone of an ass, which he saw on the ground, he slew one thousand men.

Exhausted by continuous exertions, he felt very thirsty, and prayed to God, saying: "Thou, O God, hast granted this great deliverance to thy people, through thy servant; shall I now die of thirst, and fall into the hands of the enemy?" And God heard his prayer, for he suddenly found a well of water, at which he satisfied his thirst and felt refreshed.

XXIII. SAMSON'S HERCULEAN FEAT AT GAZAH, AND HIS SUBSEQUENT DECLINE.

The Philistines dared not, after this, to venture an open fight with Samson. They were cautious, and watched his whereabouts, trusting to get him secretly

into their power. It was reported one evening that he had entered Gazah, one of the chief cities of the Philistines; and they therefore ordered that the city gates be closed, to prevent any possibility of his escape. But Samson arose about midnight, tore away the door posts, and carried them together with the doors up the mountain before Hebron. Being once more disappointed in their hopes, the Philistines devised another plan to effect his capture.

They had learned that Samson had freely visited a Philistine woman, named Delilah, who through her allurements had gained his love and confidence. They therefore called her services to their assistance, to find out for them against rich reward wherein his marvelous strength consisted. The faithless Delilah willingly lent herself for money to betray Samson's trust, but did not succeed so easily. He, suspecting her fidelity, disclosed to her various methods by which his strength could be subdued, which, however, on trial, proved failures. Delilah at another occasion said to him: "How darest thou continue to call on me pretending to love me, after having deceived me now three times?" Samson, disheartened and dispirited, at length said to her: "If I be shaven, then my strength will leave me; for I am a Nazarite of God from my birth, and as such no razor has ever touched my head."

Delilah, now convinced that Samson had disclosed to her his whole heart, sent word to the lords of the Philistines to that effect. They soon came to see her, and she, after having received the promised reward, revealed to them her secret. They waited in concealment until Samson was in a deep sleep and then the operation with the razor was duly performed. Samson,

on awaking, felt that his strength had departed ; for he could no longer resist the fierce grasps of the Philistines, who now bound him with fetters of copper, and putting out his eyes, brought him to Gazah.

XXIV. SAMSON'S DEATH.

Arrived at Gazah, Samson was thrust into prison and condemned to grind corn in the mill. After some time the lords of the Philistines held a feast in honor of their god Dagon. Thousands of them had assembled in the temple of this idol to offer to him thanks and praise for having delivered their enemy into their hands. They then gave themselves up to feasting and merriment, and to enhance their enjoyment, they sent for Samson to dance and make sport for them.

He came, led by the hand of a lad, and amidst the mockery and the deafening cries of the multitude he was placed between the two pillars of the temple. Samson, the object of their mirth and ridicule, at this moment must have felt the entire weight of his miserable existence. He lifted up his afflicted heart to his God, and with fervor and sincerity prayed: "O Eternal God, remember me but this once and restore my strength, that I may be revenged on my enemies." He then felt for the pillars, threw his arms around them, and shaking them with all his might, exclaimed: "Let me die with the Philistines."

Scarcely had the last of these words escaped his lips, when the pillars gave way, and the temple tottered and fell, burying Samson and the Philistines beneath its shattered ruins. The earthly remains of Samson were later recovered by his people, and were interred

in the sepulchre of his father between Eshtael and Zorah.

OBSERVATIONS.—Thus, dear children, ended the life of Samson, a sacrifice to his own unbending will and to his own unchastened desires. How glorious were the hopes, how great the expectations, which filled the hearts of joyful parents at the birth of that son! Had he only listened to their good advice; had he but heeded their wise counsels and lived up to the high purposes to which his life was dedicated, what a blessing he would have been to them and to his people. As a “Nazarite of God” he ought to have shielded his eyes and guarded his heart from evil desires and passions, as well as his lips were prevented from tasting strong drinks and unclean food; but alas! though possessed of a giant’s strength, he was weak at heart, and his vanity at length made him the victim of his wily enemy.

Following the deceitful vision of his eyes, he sacrificed his strength; enslaved to his passions, he lost his sight and was condemned to the lowest servitude in the mill-house of the prison.

Children, implicitly obey your parents and hearken to the advice of your teachers, and when any incipient vice is eradicated from your youthful hearts, let it not be to make way for another, more dangerous to your temporal and eternal welfare.

XXV. NOEMI AND RUTH.

On account of one of the various wars that happened during the rule of the judges, Canaan was visited by a great famine. This calamity caused Elimelech, a man

of Bethlehem-judah, to sojourn with his wife, Noemi, and Mahlon and Chilion, his two sons in the land of Moab. There he lived but a short time and died, leaving his wife and sons to mourn his death. In course of time, the latter married two women of that country, named Orpha and Ruth, but enjoyed the blessings of married life only for a short time. After a period of about ten years, they died, leaving their bereaved mother and their widowed wives in deep mourning. Noemi, the sorely afflicted mother, concluded to return to her own country, where better times were then dawning, and at once made ready to depart. Orpha and Ruth had accompanied her some distance, when Noemi, with tears in her eyes, said to them: "Return, my daughters, I pray you, each to her own mother's house, and may God repay you the love and kindness which you have shown to the departed and to me." But they answered: "No, mother, we shall go with thee to thy people." And Noemi replied: "My daughters, what can you expect from me? I am poor and forsaken and unable to assist you, and your sufferings would but increase mine. In your own country and among your own relatives, there are certainly that comfort and happiness in store for you which you so much deserve, and of which you are so well worthy." Orpha yielded to these reasons, kissed her mother-in-law, and returned. But Ruth could not be moved from her purpose. "Far be it from me," she said, "that I should leave thee. Whither thou goest, I will go, where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Nothing but death shall separate us, where thou diest will I die, and there shall I be buried." To these resolute remarks, Noemi

had nothing more to answer, and they both continued their journey and arrived at Bethlehem.

The people, on beholding them, were stricken with surprise, and exclaimed: "Is this Noemi?" And she answered: "Do not call me Noemi, which means the pleasant; but call me rather Marah, which means the bitter, for God Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. Full—in possession of health and of my dear ones—did I leave this place, and empty-handed, heartbroken and forsaken God has suffered me to return."

OBSERVATIONS.—In this chapter, dear children, our sympathies are awakened and enlisted toward the afflicted and suffering, wherever or whenever an occasion may offer. Let us at such times imitate the noble example set by Ruth to lighten the burdens and the troubles of others, through our love, affection and faithfulness to them in word and deed.

XXVI. RUTH.—BOAZ.

Ruth was not only affectionate in words, but also in deed. It was now the time of the barley harvest, and Ruth thought this a good opportunity to provide for herself and her mother-in-law, and with Noemi's permission she went out into the fields to glean the ears of corn left after the reapers. While thus busily engaged, the owner of the field, a very wealthy man named Boaz, arrived, and greeting the reapers said: "God be with ye!" And they, answering, said: "God bless thee." Beholding the modest and industrious Ruth intent on her gleaning, he asked one of his overseers: "Who is this damsel?" And he replied: "She is the Moabitish damsel that came with Noemi." Then the kind-

hearted Boaz said to Ruth: "Come thou regularly into my fields and follow my reapers, whom I will instruct to treat thee kindly. If thou be thirsty, drink out of their vessels, and at meal-times they will share their food with thee, for I have heard of thy noble behavior toward thy mother-in-law, and may God ever bless so noble-hearted a woman." Ruth bowed in thankfulness to him, and said: "Oh, that I have found grace in thine eyes, for thou hast indeed comforted a poor, friendless stranger!"

Ruth returned toward evening to the city with her gleanings, and spoke to Noemi of the kindness of the man in whose field she was at work. And Noemi asked: "What is the name of this man?" "They call him Boaz," replied Ruth. And Noemi said: "May he be blessed of the Eternal! He is our near relative, and it is God who sent thee to that particular field."

This accidental meeting of Ruth and Boaz was the cause of a turn for the better in the circumstances of Noemi and Ruth, for the modesty, industry and kind-heartedness of Ruth made such a favorable impression upon Boaz that he selected her as his wife, and God blessed them with a son, named Obed, who was the father of Jesse, whom we know as the father of David.

OBSERVATIONS.—From this chapter we may learn that God directs and guards our steps through life, that he delights in sincerity and simplicity of heart, and rewards true love and kindness by whomsoever shown to his children.

"He lowereth and raiseth up again. He woundeth and he healeth."

Children, you should learn from Ruth to hold sacred the ties of relationship; neither poverty nor death

should loosen them. Despair not in the days of misfortune, and let not vicissitudes bear down your energies. Trust in God.

XXVII. ELI.

In the days of Samson, and for years after his death, Eli was high-priest at Shiloh and judge in Israel. He had two sons, named Hophni and Phinehas, both of them very irreverent and of very dissolute habits, and who ultimately brought shame and sorrow upon a too mild and indulgent father. They forcibly took from the altar the raw flesh of the sacrifices of the people, even before the religious rites were performed. They were also guilty of other insults and outrages toward the female visitors of the tabernacle. The just complaints of the people against such wicked conduct reached the ears of their aged father, and he said to them: "What is this I hear of you? Why are you acting so wickedly? Through your loose conduct you set even a bad example to the people." But these remonstrances had no effect on Hophni and Phinehas, and a godly man foretold to Eli, in the name of God, that a terrible end awaited them.

It happened about this time that Elkanah, a pious man of Ramathaim-Zofim, in the Mount of Ephraim, came with his two wives, Hannah and Peninah, to Shiloh, to offer sacrifices to God in the tabernacle. After these God-pleasing services Elkanah prepared a feast for them, which was enjoyed only by Peninah, for Hannah, being discontented on account of having no children, did not partake of the repast, but withdrew, and found her way into the tabernacle of the Eternal.

There in earnest, silent and prolonged devotion, she stood before the sacred shrine, and prayed: "O God! if thou wouldst pity my afflictions, and grant me the blessing of a male child, then I would devote him unto the Eternal all the days of his life." These words, coming from a deep heart, could not be heard by Eli, who had closely watched her; and when she thus silently, but with moving lips continued to pray for some time, he believed her to be intoxicated, and reprimanded her. But Hannah replied: "No, my lord, I am a woman of a depressed spirit, neither wine nor strong drinks did I taste, I have only laid my troubled heart before the Eternal." Eli, being convinced of his mistake, said to her: "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant thy petition." So Hannah left the tabernacle strengthened and encouraged by her trust in God. And the Eternal granted her petition, for in the course of time she gave birth to a male child, whom she called Samuel, for she said: "I have asked him from God."

When the child had sufficiently grown, the pious parents took him up to Shiloh, and Hannah said to Eli: "I am the woman who stood before thee in prayer, and this is the lad God has blessed me with. I now give him into thy hands for the service of the Eternal, in accordance with my promise." So Samuel remained with Eli the high-priest, and through his excellent disposition and strict attention to all the duties of his state, and through his affability toward all, he soon became the favorite of God and of men.

OBSERVATIONS. — From this story it appears that Eli was altogether too mild a father, that he did not check in time, with a vigorous hand, the self-willed disposition of his sons. Where words work no improve-

ment, earnest chastisements must follow, or sin and sorrow will be the consequences.

“Chastise thy son while there is hope and care not for his crying.”—Prov. xix. 18.

From this story, too, we also learn from the sincerity of Hannah the wonderful power of prayer. A fervent prayer, coming from a pure heart, is comforting and strengthening, and is always heard by God. Our pledges to our Heavenly Father should be also strictly carried out.

“The Eternal is nigh to the broken-hearted, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit.”—Ps. xxxiv. 19.

XXVIII. THE CALL OF GOD ON SAMUEL.

Hophni and Phinehas continued in their evil ways. The good example of Samuel did not stimulate them to nobler actions, nor turn their hearts to virtue, and God, the just Judge, again reminded Eli, this time through Samuel, of the sad consequences the wickedness of his sons would produce.

One night when Samuel had lain down to sleep, he heard a voice calling: “Samuel! Samuel!” and he arose and went to Eli, saying: “Here am I, for thou hast called me.” But Eli said: “I did not call thee, go and lie down to rest again.” He had scarcely returned and laid himself down, when he heard the same voice saying: “Samuel! Samuel!” and again he hurried to Eli, saying: “Here am I, for thou didst call me.” But Eli answered as before, and Samuel as before obeyed him, But when Samuel appeared for the third time, claiming that Eli had positively called him, then Eli perceived that God had called the lad, and he said to

him: "Go and lie down, and shouldst thou hear that voice once more, then say: 'Speak, O Eternal, thy servant heareth.'" Samuel did as Eli had instructed him, and he heard the voice of God saying to him, "I will do a thing in Israel at which the ears of every one that hears shall tingle! I will do against Eli all the things which I have spoken concerning his house! His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Samuel lay down until morning, sadly moved about that which he heard. But not until Eli begged him to make known to him his vision without restraint, did he disclose his secret. And Eli, when he had heard, said to Samuel: "He is the Eternal, let Him do what seemeth good in His eyes."

OBSERVATIONS.—A good character is not misled by evil examples. Through obedience to our masters, and faithfulness in our duties, we gain the confidence of men and the favor of God. A feeling heart withholds evil reports.

XXIX. THE TRAGIC END OF ELI AND HIS SONS.

Encouraged, as we might suppose, by the blow which Samson in his last moments inflicted on the Philistines, the Israelites ventured to make another uprising against their oppressors, but in their first effort they were defeated with a loss of four thousand men. They, therefore, in accordance with the advice of their elders, sent to Shiloh for the ark of the covenant. On its arrival in the camp, under the care of Hophni and Phinehas, the people greeted it with loud and continuous acclamations of joy, and the Philistines, on learning its

nature, became utterly amazed. "Woe unto us," they said, "God is come into the camp; who shall deliver us out of the hand of this mighty God? But be ye strong and act like men, O Philistines, so that ye become not servants to the Hebrews, as they have been to you."

The battle was then renewed, and the Israelites were smitten and driven to flight with a loss of thirty thousand men, among whom were Hophni and Phinehas, and the sacred ark of God fell into the hands of the enemy.

The aged Eli, anxious for the ark of God, sat by the wayside, impatiently awaiting a report from the battlefield, when suddenly the wailings of the people of the city filled his ears; for a man who had escaped from the field brought the sad tidings, and Israel was bemoaning her terrible disaster. Eli, unable to leave his seat, because his eyes were dim, asked the cause of the lamentations, and the man came before him and said; "Israel has been smitten, thy two sons are dead, and the ark of God is in the hands of the Philistines!" Scarcely had the last words escaped the fugitive's lips, when Eli fell back from his seat, and his neck was broken. Thus died Eli. He was ninety-eight years old, and he had judged Israel forty years.

The wife of Phinehas, on hearing the sad news, was seized with convulsions. In a dying state, she gave birth to a son, whom she named, with her last breath, "Ichabod," which means: "Where is the glory?" The ark of God remained seven months in the possession of the Philistines. They, however, suffered severely during that time. At first, when brought into the temple of their god Dagon, at Ashdod, that idol was found one

morning lying flat upon his face, and having been raised up again, was found on the next morning, broken into pieces. The people of this place, as well as those of Gath, to whom the ark was next sent, were sorely stricken with plagues and divers diseases. The inhabitants of Ekron, on its arrival there, cried in their fright, saying: "They have brought the ark of the God of Israel into our midst to slay us likewise." Upon consultation, the lords, the priests, and the magicians resolved to return it with presents to the proper owners. and accordingly they did so.

OBSERVATIONS. — In this narrative, dear children, we can plainly perceive that God cares not for outward displays of piety. The presence of the ark did not spare Israel from defeat, when they did not heed the sublime laws written upon the tablets which were deposited therein. God is truthful. The predicted fate of Eli and his sons came to pass; He suffers not His glory to be profaned by falsehood under the guise of truth, nor will He permit His holy Word to be defiled unpunished by the unclean.

XXX. SAMUEL, THE LAST OF THE JUDGES [$\frac{2852}{1097}$].

Samuel was the one of those judges whose sole aim was directed to the moral and intellectual improvement of his people. He said to them, "Put away the strange gods from among you; return unto the Eternal your God with all your hearts, serve Him only; and He will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines." He then gathered the people at Mizpeh, and there prayed for them to God. They too joined him in

fasting and prayer, confessed their sins, and drew water and poured it out (a symbol expressive of humility, sorrow and repentance). And God graciously listened to their prayers. The Philistines, who attacked them at this place, were bravely met by the Israelites, and thoroughly routed. The cities taken were retaken, and quiet, lasting all the days of Samuel, was once more established. In memory of his great victory. Samuel erected a stone and called it Eben-Ezer — stone of help—for he said: “Hitherto has the Eternal helped us.” Samuel attended now to the duties of his office as if by divine inspiration. He made yearly circuits to Beth-El, Gilgal and Mizpeh, judging the people and inspiring them with love to God and man. On his return to Ramah, his place of abode, he acted in the same spirit, and in return he enjoyed the confidence of the people, who looked upon him as a prophet of God, and he is noted through time as the founder of the schools of the prophets.

XXXI. ISRAEL'S PETITION FOR A KING.

When Samuel had grown old, he appointed his sons, Joel and Abiah, as judges over Israel. But they did not walk in the ways of their father. They took bribes and served, their own ends which were immoral and avaricious. Such unholy conduct displeased and disheartened the elders. The evil examples of Hophni and Phinehas stood vividly before their eyes and they felt it their duty to guard in time against them. They therefore went to Ramah and said to Samuel: “Behold, thou art stricken in years, and thy sons do not walk in thy ways, now appoint for us a king, to judge us like

all the other nations." Samuel, though grievously surprised at their demand, did not answer, but sought relief in prayer, and soon perceived within his heart the voice of God in answer to his supplication: "Hearken unto the people, not thee, but me have they despised. Caution them, however, and tell them the ways of the king that will reign over them." Samuel thereupon said to the elders: "Know ye that your sons and your daughters, as well as your man-servants, and maid-servants, will have to do all the king's work, in the houses, in the fields, and in the work-shops, and that your possessions will be looked upon as belonging to him." But the elders and the people did not hearken to his warning words, but replied, "Nay, but we want a king who shall judge us and conduct our battles." And Samuel, before sending them away, said to them, "Then in the name of God so be it."

XXXII. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EPOCH OF THE JUDGES.

With the demand of the tribes for a king, and with God's consent to their wishes, the history of the judges comes to a close. It comprises a period of over three hundred years: from about $\frac{2500}{1449}$ $\frac{2852}{1097}$, and abounds in its main features, in vice, anarchy, idolatry and insubordination. The character of this epoch is strongly expressed in the repeatedly mentioned words of Scriptures: "There was no king in Israel in those days, and every one did that which was right in his own eyes." The judges, for the most part, appear to us as men of energy. Physical strength and daring were their ruling characteristics, but otherwise, with the

exception of but few, they failed to elevate the morals of the people, and to inspire them with a spirit of truth and holiness. We therefore find the Israelites again and again falling a prey to their idolatrous practices, and to the worst vices of the surrounding nations. Nor do we in this period find the wonted harmony and union among the tribes which made them strong and victorious during the rule of Moses and Joshua.

The selfish and indifferent lives of the discordant tribes, and the absence of a proper public spirit among them, is thus deservedly rebuked by the prophetess Deborah, in that soul-inspiring song which has descended through all the intervening ages, and yet has lost none of its freshness and vigor in the transmission :—

“Why didst thou, O Reuben, sit among the sheep-folds, and listen to the bleatings of thy flocks? And thou, O Gilead (Dan), abide beyond the Jordan? And Dan—why would he tarry in his ships, and Asher remain on the seashore, and abide in the safety of his bays?” After meting out to Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh and Issachar her warmest encomiums, she concludes her exalted strains in these words replete with a beautiful sublimity : — “Zebulun is a people that jeopardized its life unto death; and Naphtali on the high places of the battle-field !”

The following striking events, in the earlier part of this period, illustrative of the dishonesty, wickedness and lawlessness of the people, may summarize this epoch as a whole :—

1st. Michayhu's image service.

2d. The scandal committed by some men of the tribe of Benjamin, which nearly led to its annihilation.

XXXIII. MICHAYHU'S IMAGE SERVICE.

Michayhu, a man of the tribe of Ephraim, stole from his mother eleven hundred shekels of silver; but on hearing her curse the unknown thief, his conscience was touched, whereupon he returned the silver, and received his mother's blessing. She then gave two hundred shekels thereof to a silversmith with the order to make a graven and molten image. Micah placed the idol in his house of God, and appointed one of his sons to perform the priestly functions. After some time, a young man of Bethlehem-juda, a Levite, came that way, and Micah engaged him as a priest, considering it an act pleasing to God.

It now happened that the tribe of Dan, who as yet had no portion of the land, sent five men to search for a suitable place as a habitation. On reaching the house of Micah, and meeting the young priest, they said to him, "Pray, seek the counsel of God, that we may know whether we are to be prosperous on our way." And when the priest brought them answer, "Go in peace, God is with you,"—they departed, and continued their journey toward Laish. Finding this place agreeably situated, its people quiet and unconcerned, and far from neighboring assistance, they returned and reported favorably to their tribe. Upon this the Danites armed six hundred men and sent them out to take possession to the land. When they came near to the place of Micah, the spies who accompanied them said, "Do you know that there are in this house an ephod and teraphim, and a graven and molten image?"

After some consultation, they went in, and taking the

images, said to the young Levite, "Come with us, for it is better to be the priest of a whole tribe than of a single family." The priest gladly consented, and they departed. When Micah learned what had happened, he and his neighbors pursued the Danites; but they said to them, "Return ye, and save your lives." And Micah, finding them too strong for him, returned.

The Danites took possession of Laish, slew its inhabitants, destroyed the city, and built another which they called Dan. They set up therein the stolen images, and established an image service, which was continued during the entire time that the house of God was at Shiloh.

XXXIV THE SCANDALOUS CONDUCT OF SOME BENJAMINITES, AND ITS FATAL CONSEQUENCES.

A certain Levite of Mount Ephraim went to Bethlehem-judah to appease and take home his wife, who had left him on account of some domestic disagreement. Having met with a most friendly reception, he succeeded in making a settlement agreeable to both, and they then gave themselves up to social enjoyments for several days. On the fifth day toward evening they departed, and after sunset reached Gibeah — the citadel of Jerusalem—which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. Awaiting some one's hospitality, so proverbial in that country, they sat for some time in the public square, when at last an old man, returning from his work, came up to them, and on learning who they were, he invited them to his house. After they had enjoyed a frugal repast, a low and lawless crowd of the Benjaminites surrounded the house, and in the manner of the

wicked Sodomites they demanded the surrender of the strangers. The kind words and entreaties of the host in behalf of his guests were not listened to, and the eagerness to satisfy their brutal passions resulted in the death of the wife of the Levite.

The various tribes of the Israelites, upon hearing of this wicked deed, assembled in a body and ordered the Benjaminites to deliver the band of evil-doers into their hands. Upon the unwise refusal of so just a demand, a disastrous war ensued, which almost led to the entire extinction of that tribe.

Amid such perpetual disagreements, such general anarchy, and under the continual fear of such unbridled passions, it is no wonder that within the ranks of even thoughtful people there were found many who joined in the general desire of the Israelites for a king; for in the Pirke Aboth we read: "Pray ye for the welfare of the government for without it one might devour the other alive."

BIBLICAL HISTORY.

PART IV.

I. SAUL— $\frac{2875}{1074}$.

The first king of the Hebrews was Saul, the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin. He was unexpectedly, and to his utter surprise, anointed by Samuel, while in search after some of his father's asses, which had gone astray. Being out with a servant for three days without success, he was on the point of returning home, when the servant suggested to consult the seer about their errand. (The prophets in Israel were in those days called seers.) Pleased with this suggestion, Saul went onward, and learned of some maidens at a well that the seer was expected that day to be present at a festive gathering of the people.

Soon thereafter Samuel, the seer, met the wanderers. Being asked by Saul: "Pray, tell me where is the house of the seer?" he replied: "I am the seer." And having been previously advised by God to anoint the man whom he would meet, Samuel continued: "Be thou my guest at the sacrificial feast which we celebrate to-day, and relieve thy mind of all care concerning the lost animals, for they have been found and returned, and know thou, furthermore, that the desire

of the people is after thee." Saul, being exceedingly surprised by these remarks, modestly replied: "Does not my family count among the least in Israel, and am I not of one of the smallest of the tribes?" But Samuel took his guest and honored him with the first seat at the festive board, where the attendants, by special order, showed him the greatest attention. On the next morning, Samuel secretly anointed Saul with oil, and, kissing him, said: "The Eternal has anointed thee as chief over His inheritance."

In order to encourage and convince him that God was with him, Samuel named the following three events which would happen on his way home: first, that some men would meet him with the assurance that his father's lost animals were found and safe; second, that three other men, on their way to Bethel with offerings, would offer him thereof; and lastly that, on meeting a company of prophesying men, he would feel possessed of the spirit of God, and prophesy with them. All these predictions came to pass; and at the last of them, those of his acquaintances present expressed their surprise by exclaiming: "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

"The humble in spirit will attain to honor."—Prov. xxix. 23.

"Humility leads to honor."—Prov. xv. 33.

II. SAUL'S INTRODUCTION TO THE PEOPLE.

Samuel convened the people at Mizpeh for the purpose of selecting their first king. There he once more reviewed the numerous and wonderful acts of God in their behalf, and their ungrateful and

incessant demands for a king. He then drew lots, which resulted in Saul's selection as the choice of God.

Saul, being brought into the midst of the people, towered above all of them, from his shoulders upward, and Samuel said: "See ye him whom the Eternal has chosen." And the people, shouting, exclaimed: "Long live the king!"

Samuel thereupon urged the people to the faithful fulfillment of their duties toward their king, and then dismissed them.

Though almost entire satisfaction prevailed among the people, there were yet some worthless characters among them who openly said: "In what can this one help us?" But Saul, accompanied by many, left the scene without taking notice of these outbursts of discontent.

"A fool's wrath is presently known; but a prudent man covereth shame."—Prov. xii. 16.

"The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression."—Prov. xix. 11.

III. SAUL'S FIRST EXPLOIT.

Saul soon convinced the people that he was deserving of their confidence, and that he was possessed of the courage and nobility of heart worthy of a great leader.

Nahas, king of the Ammonites, afforded him an early opportunity of proving his bravery. The Israelites, being severely oppressed by the iron rule of Nahas, appealed to him for a treaty of peace, at the price of becoming his servants. In answer to their

appeal, that cruel despot agreed to yield to their petition, on condition that they would suffer the loss of their right eyes. Saul, being just returned from his work in the field, heard the lamentations of the people and the cause, and at once concluded to avenge the intended outrage. He issued a call to arms throughout his kingdom, and at the head of his army completely slew the Ammonites. The people then said to Samuel: "Who are those that murmured against Saul, saying, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' let them be brought forth that we may slay them." But Saul said: "No man shall suffer death this day, after God has wrought such deliverance in Israel."

Samuel then summoned the people to Gilgal to renew the kingdom. The people obeyed his call, and, amidst sacrificing and rejoicing before the Eternal, Saul was for a second time proclaimed king, and received the unanimous acclamations of the people.

Samuel, thereupon, once more exhorted the people to obey God, to walk in His ways, and not turn after vain things, and concluding, said: "I have served you from my boyhood to this day; and now, being old, pray tell me, in the presence of God and your king, whose animals have I taken, whom have I defrauded or oppressed, or of whose hands have I received presents, so that I may be able to restore them, and make amends?" And the people replied: "Thou hast neither defrauded nor oppressed us, nor taken aught from any of us." And Samuel said: "The Eternal and His anointed be witness that ye have not found in my hands the least." And they answered: "He is witness." Samuel then promised the people that he would continue to pray for them, and be their

instructor and adviser, so long as God's grace and kindness should grant him strength to do so; and before dismissing them, he cheered his hearers with these final words: "The Eternal will not forsake His people for the sake of His great name, since it has pleased the Eternal to make you His people. But fear the Eternal, and serve Him in truth, and with a perfect heart."

"Stand not silently by if thy neighbor be in danger."—Lev. xix. 16.

"Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge."—Lev. xix. 18.

"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches; and loving favor, rather than silver and gold."—Prov. xxii. 1.

IV. JONATHAN'S HEROISM.

The Philistines had again gathered their numerous forces, and lay in wait to strike a blow against the Israelites.

Jonathan, the son of Saul, a most valiant soldier, attacked their outposts, and in routing them, provoked a general war-cry against Israel. Saul, too, on his side, summoned all his available warriors for action; but when upon their arrival they heard of Jonathan's daring deed, and beheld the immense army of the enemy, they were seized with sudden fright, and hid themselves in caves and thickets, and other strongholds. Saul waited in vain for seven days the promised arrival of Samuel to offer sacrifices to God; but seeing the warriors scatter, and abandon him, he himself attended to that priestly function.

On meeting Samuel, who had arrived during the sacrifice, Saul said: "Thou didst not come at the

appointed time, while the people, impatient, began to disperse, and fearing the enemies' attack at any moment, I, in this threatening aspect of affairs, took it upon myself to solicit God's assistance through sacrifice." And Samuel answered: "Thou hast foolishly trespassed the ordinance of the Eternal, and in so doing thy government will not endure."

Samuel returned whence he came, and Saul, numbering his men, found only about six hundred with him, and even these almost without any weapons of war, since the Philistines had long ago removed every smith from the land, while they had three expeditions out to devastate it.

In this perilous crisis, Jonathan and his armor-bearer secretly made a daring attempt to afford relief to the people; for he said: "There is no limit to the Eternal to save, by means of many, or by means of few."

They climbed up the sharp-pointed rocks upon hands and feet, attacked the enemy on their heights, and, after smiting about twenty of them, caused terror in the entire camp, which was heightened by a violent and sudden quaking of the earth. Saul, advised of the wild commotion among the enemy, and of the absence of his son Jonathan, hastened with his men to the scene. Assisted by those Israelitish soldiers who were forced into the camp of the Philistines, and joined by them who come forth from their hiding places, he succeeded in routing them. Thus God delivered Israel from an overwhelming enemy on that day.

One incident, however, in this engagement led almost to sad consequences. Saul, in order not to

lose time, had prohibited his men, under the penalty of death, from tasting any kind of food on that day. Jonathan, greatly exhausted, and unaware of his father's prohibition, had tasted some honey of the wild bees in the forest. His father, on hearing it, pronounced death on him, which sentence, however, was set aside by the general outcry of the people in these words: "Shall Jonathan, by whose bravery God gave us victory, be put to death? Not a hair of his shall fall to the earth." And so Jonathan was saved.

"Commit thy way unto the Eternal, trust in him, and he shall bring it to pass."—Ps. xxxvii. 5.

V. SAUL AND THE AMALEKITES.

Saul had successfully fought against his surrounding enemies, the people of Moab, Ammon, Edom, Zobah, and the Philistines, when the word of God, through Samuel, directed him to make war against the Amalekites, and spare neither men nor cattle. On his march toward the enemy, he addressed himself to the Kenites, who had shown kindness to Israel on coming up from Egypt, to withdraw from among Amalek, lest they too should share their fate. Saul then attacked the Amalekites, and slew them to a man. Agag, their king, only was spared, and some of their best cattle were taken as spoil by the victor. Saul had thus for a second time disobeyed the word of God, through Samuel, and, in addition, glorified himself by leading the mighty Agag at the head of his returning army. Samuel, in the service of God, thereupon came to Saul to inform him of that folly and its consequences. Saul greeted him with the words: "Blessed be thou

of the Eternal, I have fulfilled the command of God. Only some of the best of the cattle of the enemy have I retained as sacrifices to God."

But Samuel earnestly said: "Has the Eternal as great delight in sacrifices as in obeying His voice? Behold, to obey is better than to sacrifice. . . . As thou hast despised the word of God, so God has deposed thee from being king." Saul then humbly acknowledged his sin, and asked Samuel to assist him in praying for God's pardon. And as Samuel turned to leave him, Saul caught hold of his mantle, so that it rent in twain. And Samuel said: "Thus has God rent to-day the kingdom from thee."

"I have sinned," penitently uttered Saul, "but pray honor me before the people, and accompany me, that I may prostrate myself before the Eternal," and Samuel consented.

The prophet then ordered that Agag be brought forward; and on beholding his rather unconcerned appearance, he earnestly pronounced the sentence of death on him in these words: "As thy sword has made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women." Agag's life was taken, and Samuel, with a heart full of pity for Saul, departed, never to see him again.

"When pride cometh, then cometh disgrace, but with the modest there is wisdom."—Prov. xi. 2.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but he who confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."—Prov. xxviii. 13.

VI. THE ANOINTMENT OF DAVID, AND HIS INTRODUCTION TO SAUL.

Samuel was still in a mood of pity on account of Saul, whose predicted fate he mourned, when he perceived within himself the voice of God, saying: "Go to Bethlehem, and anoint one of Jesse's sons as king over Israel." He thereupon went to that city, and perceiving the anxiety of the elders who came to meet him, he answered their greeting with the word "peace," and invited them and Jesse and his sons to be present at the sacrificial feast which he was to celebrate.

When Jesse and his seven sons came, and the prophet beheld his eldest son, Eliab, he thought that he saw in the stately figure of that man the future ruler of Israel. But at that instant he heard the voice of God within himself, saying: "Do not look at his imposing figure, for God does not look as man does, at the outward appearance, but at the heart; he is not the man." .

After the remaining six sons of Jesse had been brought in turn before him, none of whom, however, he saw fit to anoint, Jesse, at the prophet's request, sent for his absent youngest son, and on his arrival, Samuel at once saw in him the choice of God, and he anointed him.

Saul was unaware of what had transpired at Bethlehem. The knowledge, however, that his kingdom was not to endure, agitated his mind to such a degree that his spirit at times became seriously depressed. His faithful attendants, convinced of the elevating effects of music, hoped to divert his thoughts, and to

quiet his mind through the soft strains of the harp. They, therefore, recommended to their sovereign David, the son of Jesse, who was known as a skillful performer upon that instrument.

Upon Saul's request Jesse sent his son David to the court, where he soon became the favorite of the king and of his courtiers. At moments of excitement and subsequent exhaustion, the sweet tones of David's harp afforded the king signal relief, and as a mark of appreciation, Saul raised David to the honorable position of the king's own armor-bearer.

"Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart."—Sam. i. 7.

VII. DAVID AND GOLIATH.

The Philistines again had gathered their forces to make war on the Israelites. Saul, too, ordered his hosts to battle, and soon both armies lay encamped on either side of a narrow valley among the hills on the border of Judah. Suddenly a Philistine of giant stature, named Goliath, clad in heavy brazen armor, came to the front, and in an overbearing, defiant, manner, shouted: "Ye slaves of Saul, select one out of your midst to fight with me. If he be victorious, then we shall be your servants, and if I should slay him, then ye shall become ours." This insulting challenge of the Philistine, for several weeks daily twice repeated, caused anxiety and fear throughout the camp of the Israelites.

David, who had for some time past left the king's palace to keep his father's sheep, just now returned to inquire after the welfare of his brothers in the

camp. On beholding the Philistine, and hearing his defiant boasts, he said: "Who is this Philistine that he should defy the army of the living God?"

Eliab, the eldest brother of David, reproached him on account of his forwardness, but other men near by reported him to the king, who ordered him to be brought before him. David, on appearing before Saul, said: "Let no one's heart be troubled on account of this Philistine, O king! thy servant will go forth and do battle with him."

Saul tried to dissuade David from so perilous an undertaking, pointing out to the eager youth how utterly unequal he was in age, size and equipment to that giant Philistine. But David earnestly replied: "Twice, O king, has thy servant, in guarding his father's sheep, attacked and conquered wild beasts singled-handed. The Eternal that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." Such unshaken reliance on God's assistance encouraged the king in saying: "Go, the Eternal be with thee." David, declining any armor, left the royal tent, and merely with his shepherd's staff, and sling, and five smooth stones, he went forth to the combat.

Goliath, on beholding him, shouted in derision: "Am I a dog that thou comest to me with a staff? I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field." But David fearlessly replied: "Thou comest with sword, spear, and shield, but I come in the name of the Eternal, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. He will deliver thee this day into my hands, that the whole

assembled hosts may know that there is a God in Israel."

Having said this, David dropped one of the smooth stones into his sling, and with all his might hurled it at Goliath. Straight to its mark sped the stone, piercing the forehead of the giant, who fell prostrate on the earth. David, rushing forward, drew his victim's sword from its sheath, and severing his head from his body, bore it back to the camp of the Israelites. The Philistines, terror-stricken at the death of their champion; fled in confusion, but were pursued and slaughtered by the victorious army of Israel.

"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."—Prov. xvi. 18.

"The wicked curse, but thou blessest; they arise but to be put to shame, but thy servant rejoiceth."—Ps. cix. 28.

"The Eternal is with me, I fear not; what can man do unto me?"—Prov. cxviii. 5.

"The right hand of the Eternal is exalted; the right hand of God does valiantly."—Ps. cxviii. 16.

VIII. SAUL'S ENMITY TOWARD DAVID.

Through his heroic conduct and glorious success David became the favorite of the king and of his army. Saul, in appreciation of his services, set him over the men of war, to the satisfaction of all, and his son Jonathan presented him with his own robe, sword, bow and girdle, coupled with his promise of enduring friendship.

David attended to his new duties with diligence and prudence. But when the women of Israel, in their enthusiastic admiration of his deeds, paid him their respects, playing and singing in joyous strains: "Saul

has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands," then Saul became exceedingly angry, and envy filled his heart.

At the next opportunity, when David, unaware of the king's hatred toward him, played upon the harp to relieve Saul in one of his jealous moods, he narrowly escaped being killed by a javelin thrown by the hands of Saul toward him.

From this time Saul openly expressed his intention of slaying David, "for," said he to Jonathan, his son, "as long as Jesse's son liveth, neither thou nor thy kingdom shall be established." "Then," said Jonathan to his father, "let not the king sin against his servant David, who has not sinned against thee . . . and by whom God has wrought a great salvation for all Israel."

These words failed not to have a good effect on the father, for he said: "As the Eternal lives, he shall not be slain."

Jonathan thereupon brought David to Saul, who welcomed him, and even gave him his daughter Michal as his wife.

"Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous, but who is able to stand before envy?"—Prov. xxvii. 4.

"A sound heart is the life of the flesh, but envy the rottenness of the bones."—Prov. xiv. 30.

IX. SAUL'S ENMITY (CONTINUED).

Saul's change of conduct toward David was not sincere. History even accuses him of having made David his son-in-law for the purpose of getting him the more surely into his power, in order to destrōy

him. The success of David in another battle against the Philistines stirred up his envy and hatred toward David, and so intense did it become that he was in constant danger of falling a victim to the hirelings of the king. But the precaution of his faithful wife, Michal, who well knew the evil intentions of her father, saved him from his impending fate. The snare was laid for him in this wise: The intended assassins came to David's house to summon him before the king. Michal, well knowing of the evil design of her father, sent word back that he was sick and unable to appear before him. In the meantime she secretly let David down through a window to escape and laid an image covered up in the bed to represent him.

The messengers soon returned with the order to fetch David, even with the bed, but to their disappointment found only the wrapped up image in the bed. Michal, on being questioned and accused by her father of having assisted in her husband's escape, calmly answered: "Why, I saw my own life endangered by his threats." Only Jonathan knew of David's hiding-place. On meeting him he said: "I shall try once more to speak to my father in thy behalf, and in order to escape detection I shall advise you of the result in the following manner: I shall come out here with my lad to shoot off arrows, and require him to gather the same. If I then say to him, 'Hurry on, the arrows are further away,' know thou that I did fail in my errand. But if my instructions be, 'They are nearer this way,' then thou mayest safely return." At the usual festive gathering on the New Moon day, Jonathan thought it a desirable opportunity to test his father's feeling toward David. He began his task in excusing the absence of

David, whom he granted permission to attend a family feast at Bethlehem. Saul, burning with anger, said: "I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own shame and that of thy mother; send for David, for he shall surely die." Upon the reply of Jonathan: "Why shall he die?" What has he done?" the enraged father cast his javelin toward him, which luckily missed its mark, and Jonathan left his seat with a heart full of grief for David. He then hurried with his lad into the field, seemingly to amuse himself with his bow and arrow, but actually to carry out the plan he had devised for saving him. After the lad was sent back Jonathan and David met, kissed each other, and wept. "Go in peace," then said Jonathan; and with the renewed assurance of unfading friendship between themselves, and with hope and trust in God's protection, they parted.

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."—Prov. xvii. 17.

"A man that has a friend must show himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."—Prov. xviii. 24.

X. THE FLIGHT OF DAVID

David in his flight sought shelter with Samuel at Ramah. His story of anxiety and trouble awakened the sympathy of the prophet, who took him to Naiath, where the flourishing prophet school was located.

David enjoyed this treat but for a short time, for the messengers of the king and even he himself came after him. The devotional prayers and songs of the prophet students, however, excited their own religious feeling to such a degree that, instead of making search after

David, they, too, joined them in their religious exercises. David left this place and reached Nob. Here the priest Ahimelech, unaware of David's troubles, showed him the hospitalities due to the son-in-law of the king, and upon his request for a sword, presented him with the sword of Goliath which he had in his keeping.

These acts of kindness and hospitality were of the saddest consequences to the priest, to his associates and to his immediate family. For when Saul, in his pursuit of David, reached Nob, and learned there from one of his chief herdsman, named Doeg, how David had been received and honored by Ahimelech, he ordered that priest, his family and all his associates before him, and accused them of conspiring against him, and notwithstanding their assurances of innocence and loyalty, the enraged king condemned them all to death, which sentence was strictly carried out by the wicked informer Doeg.

Eighty-five priests were thus slain, and even Nob, one of the priests' cities, was destroyed. Ebjathar, one of Ahimelech's sons, alone escaped the general slaughter by timely flight.

David, on hearing from Ebjathar of these cruel deeds, deeply mourned the loss of so many lives on his account and promised him his protection.

On his arrival at Gad the servants of the king Ahish recognized him, and, fearing Saul, reported him to their master. David, in danger of being captured or slain, feigned insanity before the king, and was thereupon sent away. His next hiding-place was the cave of Adullam. Here his parents and brothers joined him,

and about four hundred aggrieved men made him their chief. After having intrusted his father and mother to the care of the King of Moab, he heard that the Philistines had gone on a plundering expedition against Keilah and its well filled storehouses. Although bowed down in spirit on account of his own troubles, and requiring all his energy for his own safety, David could not suppress his patriotic desires to lend a helping hand to his suffering brethren. He hastened to their assistance and was successful in routing the enemy and freeing the city from the marauders.

Saul made several more attempts to capture David, but in vain, for God protected him. Nay, on two occasions Saul's life was actually in the hands of David, who magnanimously spared it. It was once when Saul entered a cave to rest, not knowing that David was hidden therein at the opposite end. David at this time cut off a piece of Saul's garment. At another time David went during the night to the camp of his pursuing enemy when all were asleep, and came so near the king that he could take his spear. In both instances David asked the king wherefore he pursued him so incessantly, while there was no evil within him against the king, whereupon Saul confessed his wrong, saying: "Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast returned me good for evil. May God reward thee for the good which thou hast done unto me this day."

Saul then returned. About this period Samuel died (1065), and was deeply mourned by all Israel.

"Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people; neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor."—Levit. xix. 16.

“Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people.”—Levit. xix. 18.

“He that conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”—Prov. xxviii. 13.

XI. NABAL AND ABIGAIL.

Though Saul had abandoned open hostilities against him, David did not venture to leave his place of safety, and remained in the wilderness. Being in want of provisions he sent, through ten of his men, his greetings of peace and good will to a neighboring wealthy man, named Nabal, who was just then engaged in shearing his large herds of sheep, asking him for the needed assistance. David, whose men were of great service to Nabal's herdsmen, certainly expected that his petition would be cheerfully granted, instead of which, however, it was met by an ungrateful and offensive refusal. Irritated by Nabal's insulting reply, David went at the head of four hundred armed men to avenge the mean and shameful treatment which he had suffered. Abigail, the prudent wife of the hard-hearted Nabal, on being informed by one of her servants of what had transpired, at once selected a rich present of provisions, and went with some of her men to deliver it to David.

Meeting him with his men half way, she bowed to David, and while graciously and in flattering terms (1 Sam. xxv. 25) offering her gift, asked his pardon for the ungenerous conduct of her husband.

David replied: “Blessed be the Eternal, the God of Israel, who has sent thee this day to meet me. Blessed mayest thou be, whose good counsel has prevented me

from avenging myself with mine own hand; for truly but for thee Nabal and all his possessions would be no more by the dawn of to-morrow." So, receiving her present, David said to her: "Depart in peace," and she departed.

Nabal knew neither of his imminent danger nor of his wife's prudent act by which it was prevented. Abigail told him of it the next morning, when he became so affected that he fell sick and died ten days after. Abigail became later the wife of David.

"The worthless person speaks villainy, and his heart will work injustice to practice hypocrisy."—Isaiah xxvii. 6.

"The instruments of the avaricious man are evil: he devises wicked resolves to destroy the poor with words of falsehood, even when the needy speaks what is right."—Isaiah xxxii. 7.

"He lends unto the Eternal who is liberal to the poor; and his good deed will he repay unto him."—Prov. xix. 17.

"A person of a benevolent eye will indeed be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor."—Prov. xxii. 9.

"Withhold not good from him who is deserving of it, when it is in thy power to give."—Prov. iii. 27.

"Be not rash in thy spirit to be angry; for anger rests in the bosom of the fool."—Ecc. vii. 9.

"By long forbearance is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaks bones."—Prov. xxv. 15.

XII. DAVID AMONG THE PHILISTINES.

David had no faith in Saul's avowed change of sentiment toward him, and fearing, moreover, of falling unaware into his hands, he resolved to flee into the land of the Philistines. He thereupon left the boundaries of Judea with his household, and his men, and their families, and arrived safely at Gath. The King Achish received him in a friendly spirit, and, upon his request for a country place wherein to reside, he was

permitted to occupy Ziklag as a permanent dwelling-place, and here he remained for over a year. During that time he made various raids upon the remnants of some neighboring heathens, while representing to the inquiring king that they were made in southern Judea, thus strengthening Achish's belief that he had fallen out with his own countrymen.

About this time the Philistines again gathered their forces against Israel. Achish asked David to join with his men the invading army, and as a sign of his unshaken confidence in him, he made him guardian over his own person.

On beholding the hosts of the Philistines, Saul became utterly amazed. In vain asking God's counsel, he ventured in despair to seek advice from the departed spirit of Samuel, by means of the deceitful practice of necromancy, through the medium of a woman (see 1 Sam. xxviii. 7). But when, in disguise, he called upon that woman for this purpose, she answered: "Thou well knowest that Saul had cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land; wherefore, then, layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?" And only after the most solemn assurances that she should suffer no harm, she yielded to his request.

The verdict of the living prophet still fresh in his mind, and being perhaps known also by that woman, it was easy for her to repeat the same, probably through the art of ventriloquism, and, in addition, to foretell to him a disastrous result of the ensuing war with the Philistines. On hearing these utterances, which Saul, in his delusion, took as coming from the departed spirit of Samuel, his last spark of hope became extinguished,

his energy lamed, and he fell prostrate to the ground. The woman, greatly terrified, ran to his assistance, and entreated him to partake of some strengthening food which she had prepared; and though at first refusing to eat, he at last assented and then departed.

“There shall not be found among thee any one who causeth his son or his daughter to pass through the fire; one who uses divination, one who is an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a conjurer.”—Deut. xviii. 10.

XIII. ISRAEL'S DEFEAT AND THE DEATH OF SAUL.

The Philistines now prepared for action. Their forces, marching by thousands, and headed by their respective princes, were placed in position. On observing David and his men among those of the King of Achish, the princes became exceedingly angry, and peremptorily demanded their exclusion. Achish, in spite of his assurances as to the faithfulness of David, had to yield, and David and his men returned. Having thus escaped the great danger of being compelled to fight against his own people, he had soon to face another horrible disaster. A ravaging party of Amalekites came to Ziklag, and finding the city unprotected, captured the women and children and all they could carry off, and laid the place in ashes. David and his men, beholding on their return the ruins of their homes and missing their beloved wives and children, lifted their voices in sorrowful weeping. Instead of comforting one another, the low characters among David's men rebukingly laid the blame on him for hav-

ing failed to leave the proper guards at home, and in their wild outbursts threatened to stone him. But David, whose trust was in God, urged them to quiet their lamentations and follow him in pursuit of the wicked robbers and incendiaries. Strengthened by a solemn prayer to God, and by the encouraging counsel of the priest Ebjathar, he set out with his 600 men, leaving, however, 200 of them, who seemed to be too weary to follow, at the river Besor, as guards of the baggage. On their way they met an Egyptian slave in a fatigued condition. On inquiry, he stated that he had been abandoned by his Amalekite master. After having regained sufficient strength through the food given him by David, he assented to show him the track of the enemy. They were overtaken, while overcome by excessive feasting, and almost utterly slain. The captured women and children and all their other property were retaken, together with a great booty of cattle. At their return, they were greeted by their companions with utterances of praise and joy. The greedy and low among David's men, however, responded by saying: "You shall have no share of this spoil which we have won." David, seriously displeased in his heart, declared such selfish conduct as mean and unjust, and made it a standing rule that those who stay with the baggage, as well as those who are otherwise prevented from joining active warfare, shall share the spoil of the enemy equally with the rest. In the meantime the battle between the Philistines and the Israelites had been fought. The latter were slain and driven to flight, Saul's sons were among the dead, and he himself had fallen into the hands of the enemy. "Draw thy sword and kill me," he cried, at this peril-

ous moment, to his armor-bearer, "ere these unclean Philistines lay their hand on me!" and, being refused, he threw himself on his own sword. His faithful armor-bearer, seeing him expire, ended his own life in the same heroic manner. The Philistines beheaded the dead bodies of Saul and his sons, sent their heads as trophies of war throughout their cities, and placed their trunks upon the wall of Beth Shan.

Some of the most valiant of the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, at the risk of their own lives, succeeded in taking down those bodies and burned them, interring, however, the remaining bones at Jabesh. They mourned the loss of Saul and his sons for seven days.

Thus the very men in whose behalf Saul proved his first valorous act as king, delivering them from a cruel enemy, repaid a debt of gratitude to him even in his death.

XIV. DAVID'S LAMENTATIONS OVER SAUL AND JONATHAN.

On the third day after the disastrous overthrow of Israel by the Philistines, the sad tidings reached the ears of the anxious David. A fugitive Amalekite from the battle-field, being likely aware of the hostile feelings of Saul toward David, and expecting a rich informer's reward, was the unlucky news-bearer. After a detailed description of the result of the battle, he added: "I found King Saul lying wounded in his death agony, and struck him the last fatal blow." He then held up before David the crown and armlets of Saul and said: "These ornaments have I taken from the dead body and brought hither to my lord."

David received these reports with the utmost sorrow

and grief. He rent his clothes and mourned and fasted with all his men till the evening. And to his informant he said: 'How didst thou dare to lift thy hand against the anointed of the Eternal? Thy blood is upon thine own head; thine own mouth has testified against thee; thou art condemned to die.'

David then bewailed the death of Saul and Jonathan in the following memorable and poetical words.

"O gazelle of Israel, slain upon the high places!

How are the mighty fallen!

Tell it not in Gath, make it not known in the streets of Askelon,

Lest the daughters of the Philistines triumphantly rejoice

Ye mountains of Gilboa, neither dew nor rain be upon you;

For there the shield of the mighty was stained.

The sword of Saul, which never returned empty,

The bow of Jonathan, which never turned back.

Saul and Jonathan, the beloved and pleasant in their lives.

Even in their deaths they were not separated.

O my brother Jonathan, thou so dear to me, I am distressed for thee.

How are the mighty fallen.'

"At the fall of thine enemy do not rejoice, and at his stumbling let not thy heart be glad."—Prov. xxiv. 17.

XV. DAVID KING OVER JUDAH.

The successor of Saul was David. He was anointed king by the men of Judah at Hebron, which place he made the abode of his family. He marked the ascent

to his royal dignity by sending messengers to the men of Jabesh-Gilead with his greetings in the words: "Blessed be ye of the Eternal, that you have done kindness to your lord Saul, and have buried him. May the Eternal deal with you in kindness and in truth. And I likewise will repay you that benevolent deed. Strengthen yourselves and be valiant, and know ye that the men of Judah have anointed me their king." In the meantime, Abner, the chief commander of Saul's army, proclaimed his master's son Ish-boseth (man of shame) as king over the other tribes.

This disunion led to a protracted civil war between both factions. Joab, the son of Zeruiah, a sister of David, was the commander of the army of David, and Abner commanded that of Ish-Bosheth. Before actual hostilities began, the two leaders agreed to select each twelve men of their ranks to perform a feat of war. It resulted in a bloody fight, for each party actually killed the other, so that none survived. A fierce battle followed, which ended in the overthrow of Abner's army. Abner took to flight and was hotly pursued by the light-footed Asahel, a brother of Joab. On looking back and beholding Ashael, he bade him twice, for the sake of his life, to leave off pursuing him, and rather aim at some other fugitive. Asahel did not heed this timely warning, and fell by the spear of Abner. Joab and his other brother Abishai now pursued Abner, but he said: "Shall the sword continue to devour? Knowest thou not that it will be bitter in the end?" These words had such an effect upon Joab that he sounded the trumpet to return, and Abner continued his flight.

XVI. THE DEATH OF ABNER AND ISH-BOSHETH.

The war between the contending parties lasted yet for a long while, but David gained in power and renown more and more, while Ish-Bosheth's cause grew weaker and weaker. A weak man himself and proclaimed king by the machinations of Abner, he was considered but a mere creature of the latter, while David was known as the anointed of God through Samuel, who in the name of God predicted that Saul and his house should not endure. Abner foresaw that his position must fail before long, and therefore sent messengers to David for a treaty of peace under the promise of bringing all his men over to him. On their return with a favorable reply, Abner spoke to the elders and also in the ears of Benjamin, saying: "You have been before this desiring David as king over you, and now follow him, for God has said: 'By the hand of my servant David will I save my people Israel out of the hands of all their enemies.'" He then with twenty of his selected men went to Hebron to meet David. They were received in a friendly manner and treated to a well prepared feast. Highly pleased with the reception they met, they left in order to perfect their plan. Just then Joab and his men returned with rich spoil from pursuing a troop. On hearing how Abner had been honored by the king, he said to David: "What hast thou done? Why didst thou send away Abner, who came only to deceive thee, and to learn thy going out and thy coming in?" He then left the king and hastily sent messengers after Abner. Upon

his return Joab took him aside, pretending to speak secretly with him, and slew him.

When the report of this vile act reached the ears of David, he sorrowfully exclaimed: "I am innocent before God of the blood of Abner; may it rest on the head of Joab." And Abner was buried in Hebron, deeply mourned by the king and the people. In a similar treacherous manner Ish-Bosheth was assassinated by two of his own men while reposing in his sleeping chamber. After the committal of this bloody deed, the vile murderers came to David with the head of their victim, expecting of him a great reward. David, overcome with grief at the ghastly sight, ordered the wicked criminals, Rechab and Baanah, to be slain at once, and the head of the poor victim to be interred in the grave of Abner at Hebron.

XVII. DAVID KING OVER ALL ISRAEL.

The noble conduct of David even toward his adversaries gained for him the respect and esteem of all the tribes of Israel. The elders of those under the rule of Abner now came to David saying: "Behold we are thy bone and flesh, and moreover God has said unto thee, 'Thou shalt lead my people and be unto them a chief' Accept, therefore, our submission under thy reign." David thereupon made a covenant with them before the Eternal, and they anointed him their king.

By the influx of men from the various tribes David's army numbered over half a million armed soldiers. He now resolved to remove the seat of government from the remote Hebron nearer to the center of the

country, and his choice fell upon Jerusalem, the strong city of the Jebusites. David's army advanced toward the place, and the lower city, already once taken in the time of Joshua, fell soon into its power, while the upper city, with its citadel, defied every attack. Nay, trusting in the impregnability of their fortress, the Jebusites had insultingly manned the battlements with lame and blind men. David being angry and excited by this insult, promised that he who would first storm the stronghold should be appointed chief captain of the host. The task was performed by Joab, who thereupon received the promised reward. The citadel was taken (1046), Jerusalem became the metropolis of the kingdom, and David fixed his residence on Mount Zion, calling it, "the City of David."

His next object was to free Israel from the still troublesome Philistines, and with the assistance of God, which he ever sought, he utterly routed them and their idols in two successive battles.

David's reign was now firmly established, and his fame spread far and wide. Hiram, King of Tyre, sent him his greetings and assurances of his friendship, and later provided him with workmen and material for the construction of a royal dwelling. Feeling thus secure from civil and foreign wars, David directed his special attention to secure the moral welfare of his people, by improving their religious worship. Upon his order, the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem, with music and joyous demonstrations, and after offering numerous sacrifices, he distributed among all his people bread and wine, and blessed them in the name of God. His pious mind was now troubled that he should live in a house of cedars, while the ark of God was resting

in a tent of curtains. He wished to build a costly temple to the Eternal, and expressed his desire to the prophet Nathan. But that prophet, in the name of God, told him, saying: "Not thou, but thy son after thee, during his reign shall build for me a house. I shall be to him a father and he shall be as my son. I will establish his kingdom forever, and my kindness shall not depart from him."

David, with a heart full of gratitude and humility, prayed to God, saying: "Thou, O Eternal, art great, and there is none like to Thee. Let the word which Thou hast spoken, concerning Thy servant and concerning his house, stand firm forever."

"And thou shalt love the Eternal thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."—Deut. vi. 5.

"Take heed unto thyself that thou forgettest not the Eternal thy God, . . . that thou wouldst say: my power and the strength of my hands have got me this wealth; . . . for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth."—Deut. viii. 11, 17, 18.

XVIII. DAVID'S KINDNESS TOWARD MEPHIBOSHETH, AND HIS TRIBUTE OF SYMPATHY TO HANUN.

David in his glory did not forget those to whom he felt himself indebted for their true friendship and assistance. On inquiry he learned from Ziba, a servant of Saul, that Jonathan had left a son, named Mephibosheth, who, lamed in both his legs, was helpless and uncared for. Remembering the deep affection of the father of the forsaken son toward himself, he at once sent for him to offer him his protection. On beholding the hapless son of his faithful friend, David said unto him: "Fear thou not, I will show kindness

to thee for the sake of thy father. Thou shalt henceforth share with me my table, and all the property of thy grandfather Saul shall be restored unto thee." Mephibosheth expressed in feeling words his thanks to the king for these unexpected proofs of real kindness toward himself, whereupon David appointed Ziba and his sons as guardians over the estate of Mephibosheth.

In a like friendly spirit, David sent a message of condolence to Hanun, the recently appointed king of the Ammonites, on the late demise of his father Nahash. But Hanun willingly lent his ear to the princes of Ammon, who, distrusting the sincere feelings of David, decried his messengers as mere spies, whereupon the ill-advised king sent them back with shameful personal insults. Anticipating David's just anger and vengeance, Hanun sought and obtained assistance from various cities of the Syrians, who sent him 33,000 men. Joab with his forces fought several decisive battles against the united armies, routed them, and made the Syrians tributary to David.

"Let kindness and truth not forsake thee, bind them about thy throat, write them upon the tablets of thy heart."—Prov. iii. 3.

"If sinners wish to entice thee, consent thou not."—Prov. ii. 10.

"Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people."—Lev. xix. 16.

"The integrity of the upright guideth them, but the cunning of the treacherous destroyeth them."—Prov. xi. 3.

XIX. DAVID'S GREAT SIN AND HIS SUBSEQUENT REPENTANCE.

It was during one of the battles with the Ammonites that David, enslaved by the lust of his eyes, became guilty of a most heinous crime. He saw from the roof

of his palace a woman named Bathsheba, whose charming beauty awakened in him the ardent desire of adding her to the list of his wives. Learning, however, that she was the wife of Uriah, one of his bravest soldiers in the battlefield, he sent an order to Joab, the captain of his army, to expose Uriah in the front rank of the hottest contest. This order was obeyed, and Uriah soon fell. The sorrow-stricken wife deeply mourned her loss, but when the days of mourning were over, Bathsheba became the wife of David.

The prophet Nathan, in the name of God, then went to the king, and said: "Once it happened that an exceedingly rich man, the owner of many flocks and herds, was visited by a distinguished traveler, whom he wanted to honor. Too avaricious to sacrifice a lamb from his own herd, he robbed a poor neighbor of his only one, which had become so endeared to him, and had it prepared for his guest."

"As true as God liveth," David excitedly exclaimed, "he who has done this thing is deserving of death, and fourfold he ought to repay the damage."

And Nathan replied: "Thou art the man; thou hast sadly despised the word of God."

David now felt the magnitude of his crime. With a heart full of emotions of the deepest sorrow and earnest penitence, he said: "I have sinned against the Eternal. Will He have mercy upon me?" And Nathan, before leaving David, said: "God may forgive thee, but know thou that sorrow and affliction shall henceforth not depart from thy house."

The following lines of Ps. li. furnish a grand illustration of David's sincere repentance and his trust and hopefulness in God's mercy and pardon.

“Be gracious unto me, O God, according to Thy kindness.

Blot out my transgression according to Thy great mercy.

For I am conscious of my crime.

Of my glaring sin I have full knowledge.

Cleanse me, wash me, that I may become pure and white.

Create in me, O God, a clean heart,

Renew within me a firm spirit.

Cast me not away from Thy presence,

Do not take from me Thy holy spirit.

That I may teach transgressors thy ways,

And sinners may return unto Thee.

For thou delightest not in sacrifices,

Burnt-offerings Thou desirest not.

A broken spirit is the sacrifice of God.

An humble and penitent heart Thou despisest not.

“He that concealeth his transgressions will not prosper, but who confesseth and forsaketh them will obtain mercy.—Prov. xxviii. 13.

XX. DAVID'S FAMILY TROUBLES.

As the prophet Nathan, in the name of God, had predicted, so it happened. Sorrows and afflictions entered the house of David and made the remainder of his life dreary. Looking upon them as the deserved chastisements of the Just Judge, David accepted and bore them with the utmost resignation.

Thus his child, the first-born son of Bathsheba, fell dangerously sick. David, in his distress, fasted, sat upon the earth, and fervently prayed to God for the recovery of his beloved child. But when, on the sev-

enth day, his son had expired, David rose from the earth, washed himself, changed his dress, partook of food, and composedly remarked to his inquiring attendants: "The child is dead, wherefore should I fast and pray any longer? Can I restore him again to life? I shall surely go to him, but he will not return to me."

God, who in His wisdom and mercy woundeth and healeth up again, gave to the sorrow-stricken parents another son, whom they called Solomon. When the boy was grown up, David intrusted him to the care of the prophet Nathan, who called him Jedideyah (the beloved of God). Another of David's family troubles was caused by the shameful conduct of his eldest son Amnon toward his step-sister, Tamar. Absalom, her brother, took vengeance on the vile evil-doer by causing his assassination two years later, during a feast to which he had invited him. Absalom, fearing the anger of his father, took refuge with his grandfather by his mother's side, Thalmay, the King of Geshur, in Syria, and remained there for three years. Joab, well aware that the heart of the king was yearning for his son Absalom, in an ingenious manner tried and succeeded to persuade David to have him recalled. He engaged the services of a wise woman of Thekoah, whom he sent to the king with the following petition: "Help. O king, a poor widow! I, thy maiden, had two sons, and it came to pass that, in a quarrel among themselves, one slew the other. And now the whole family demands that I give up the slayer of his brother, that he, too, be put to death for the crime which he has committed; thus bereaving me of the last I have in this world."

David, moved to pity by the sad story of the widow, said to her: "Go to thy house; I will issue my charge concerning thee. Not one hair of thy son shall fall to the earth."

The woman now continued: "Let thy maiden speak unto my lord the king, that thou wilt, in the same forgiving spirit, take pity on thine own son Absalom, and act toward him as thou hast promised to do toward my son."

Upon the king's inquiry, the woman confessed that she acted in the service of Joab, who put this story into her mouth; whereupon David sent the faithful Joab to recall Absalom, under the restriction, however, that, for the present, he should not be brought into his presence.

On his return to Jerusalem, Absalom repaired to his own house. The perfect beauty of his person and the extraordinary growth of his hair (it being the weight of two hundred shekels or about five pounds) attracted the attention and admiration of all that met him. After the lapse of two years, Absalom repeatedly sent for Joab, asking his assistance in introducing him to his father. But only after his barley field had been set on fire by Absalom's servants, Joab yielded to the request of his master's son, and succeeded in reuniting him with his father.

"Should we accept the good alone from God, and the evil we should not accept?"—Job ii. 10.

"It is good to await silently and composedly the salvation of the Eternal."—Lam. iii. 26.

"There is a future, and thy hope will not be cut off."—Prov. xxiii. 18.

XXI. ABSALOM'S REBELLION.

Absalom's affection for his father was but a despicable means of reaching his wicked aim, the usurpation of his father's throne, and his amiability toward the people was but feigned—a vile means of gaining their favor.

Standing daily at the gate of the court house, he approached the people who came for justice in matters of contention, artfully addressing them, saying: "If I were to be judge of the land, every one should surely find justice at my hands without delay, but at the court of the king there is scarcely one who would grant you a hearing." He then belied his father in asking and obtaining from him permission to go to Hebron, for the purpose of offering a sacrifice to God, in accordance with his vow on leaving the country.

With two hundred invited guests, he went to Hebron, and from there secretly sent messengers to all the tribes of Israel with the words: "On your hearing the sound of the trumpet, know ye and proclaim: Absalom reigneth in Hebron."

His wickedly devised plan proved successful, and through the aid of the counsel of Ahithophel, the wise but faithless counselor of David, Absalom's conspiracy spread rapidly, bringing the people in large numbers over to his side.

As the sad news reached the ears of David, he at once took to flight, followed by his household, his faithful servants, and 600 men from Gath, besides his body-guard, the Cherethites and Pelethites (foreign warriors). On beholding Itthai, the Gittite, David said to him: "But yesterday thou camest, and to-day

I should move thee to wander about with us? Return with thy men." And Itthai answered: "As the Eternal liveth, I shall not leave thee, whether it be for death or life." David then viewing the priests and the Levites bearing the ark of the covenant, said to Zadok: "Return with the ark of the covenant into the city, for if I shall find favor in the eyes of God, He will bring me back again and permit me to see it and His house; but if He should say: 'I have no delight in thee,' here am I, let Him do unto me as seemeth good in His eyes." The priest obeyed, and David and his men passed on. Sighing and weeping they ascended the Mount of Olives, when Hushai, the friend of David, with his garment rent and earth upon his head, came to meet him. "Return," said David kindly to him, "and offer thy services to Absalom; perhaps that thou mightest succeed in defeating the counsel of Ahithophel, and thus render thyself serviceable to me, while thy presence with us would but increase our burden." And Hushai obeyed.

Somewhat further on Ziba met the king, offering him two asses, abundantly laden with bread, raisins, figs and wine. Being asked about the well-being of his master, he falsely stated that he was hailing this revolt, saying: "Now will Israel restore unto me the kingdom which belonged to my father." As a reward, the tale-bearer was made the owner of all of his master's property. At Bachurim, Shimei, of the family of Saul, came toward David, cursing and throwing stones at him. Enraged against the vile offender, Abishai, Joab's brother, asked permission to slay him; but David calmly replied: "Behold, mine own son is after my life, why should I take revenge on this Ben-

jamite? Let him curse, perhaps the Merciful will take pity on me and change his curses into blessings."

1. "A godless person is a man of injustice, walking with a distorted mouth. He blinketh with his eyes, he scrapeth with his feet, he pointeth with his fingers; perverseness in his heart, he contriveth evil at all times, he scattereth abroad discord; therefore shall suddenly come his calamity, unaware shall he be broken without a remedy."—Prov. vi. 12-16.

2. "Six things there are which the Eternal hateth, and seven are an abomination unto his spirit. Haughty eyes, a tongue of falsehood, and hands that shed innocent blood. A heart that contriveth plans of injustice, feet that hasten to run after evil. A false witness that eagerly uttereth lies, and him that scattereth abroad discord among brethren."—Prov. vi. 16-18.

3. "Cursed be that holdeth in light esteem his father and his mother."—Deut. xxvii. 16.

4. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."—Prov. xx. 17.

5. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people."—Lev. xix. 16.

6. "At the fall of thine enemy do not rejoice, and at his stumbling let not thy heart be glad."—Prov. xxiv. 17.

XXII. ABSALOM'S DEATH.

Absalom and his men had entered Jerusalem, when Hushai approached him, saying: "Long live the king!" Being asked the reason for abandoning his friend David, Hushai answered: "I shall abide with him who is the choice of God and of the people." Absalom soon held a council of war, when Ahithophel advised not to lose time; and, in order to make victory certain, to allow him to surprise David during that night with 12,000 men. But Hushai, pointing to David's great experience in war, and to the bravery and strength of his men,

thought a hasty advance a too dangerous adventure. "Let Absalom rather gather about himself every available man from Dan to Beer-sheba," said he, "and then command in person the battle, and our arms will be crowned with victory."

Hushai's counsel prevailed, and was at once secretly dispatched to David with the word: "Pass immediately over the Jordan." Ahithophel despairingly left Jerusalem and ended his life by hanging himself.

David obeyed the word of Hushai, crossed the Jordan with his men, and advanced toward Mahanaim. There he was joyfully received, and by the chiefs, Barsilai, Shobi, and Machir, plentifully supplied. He then divided his army into three divisions under the leadership of Joab, Abishai and Ithai, and yielding to their united entreaties, not to venture himself upon the battlefield, he implored them, in the hearing of their forces, saying: "Deal gently with the lad Absalom."

On the east side of the Jordan, in the forest of Ephraim, the two opposing armies engaged in a battle, which resulted in the defeat of Absalom's army with a loss of 20,000 men. He himself, while in his flight riding under an oak tree, became entangled with his long, heavy hair in its branches, thus hanging between heaven and earth. As the report of his helpless situation reached Joab, he said to his informer: "And why didst thou not slay him?" The man replied: "How should I dare to lay hand on the son of the king, against his special request?" Joab, burning with wrath against so unnatural a son, ran to the scene, and with his own hands struck him the death blow,

whereupon he sounded the trumpet for the cessation of the bloody contest.

The news of Absalom's death filled the father's heart with immense grief. "O my son Absalom," cried David. "Absalom, my son! Would that I had died instead of thee."

"There are many thoughts in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Eternal alone will stand firm."—Prov. xix. 21.

"Before downfall goeth pride, and before stumbling, haughtiness of spirit."—Prov. xvi. 18.

"Whoso curseth his father or his mother—his lamp shall be quenched in obscure darkness."—Prov. xx. 20.

XXIII. DAVID'S RETURN TO JERUSALEM.

David's outburst of sorrow and grief, for the loss of even a faithless son, made a deep impression on the people, and caused self-rebuke and contention among them for having assisted in the rebellion. When finally the men of Judah joined and accompanied the king on his return, the men of Israel took offense at not having been called to participate in that honor. The Benjamite Sheba heightened their excited feeling by exclaiming: "We have neither part nor inheritance in David, the son of Jesse," and thus succeeded in stirring up another severe contest among both parties. Through the promptness of David, in sending his best warriors in hot pursuit after him, the traitor soon saw himself besieged in Abel of Beth-Maachah, which city Joab threatened to storm. A wise woman of the place, however, entreated the general to spare the city, under the promise of delivering to him the head of Sheba. Joab assented, and the head of the traitor was soon cast into his hands,

whereupon Joab blew the trumpet, and retired from the city in peace.

David, an affectionate father, was also magnanimous toward his enemies. Shimei, who so wickedly cursed and threw stones at him on his flight, came now bowing and kneeling before the king, imploring his mercy and forgiveness. David, in opposition to the stringent measures proposed by Abishai, said to him: "Thou shalt not die."

Neither dealt David harshly with Ziba, when he became convinced that the latter had slandered his master. Turning toward Mephibosheth, who now came to meet the king and assure him of his fidelity, David said to him: "Ziba shall divide with thee the land which was given to him." "Nay my lord," answered Mephibosheth, "let him keep all; I have enough that thou, O king, hast returned in peace."

With a heart full of joy and satisfaction came the aged Barzilai and greeted the king. David, remembering his kindness in the wilderness, invited him to go with him that he might return his hospitality. But Barzilai said: "How long have I to live? I am to-day fourscore years old. May the king remember my son Chimham." And David did remember him. (The xxii. chapt. of 2 Sam. gives full expression of David's feelings of gratitude to God for his delivery.)

David's quiet of mind was soon again disturbed by another calamity, which he felt the more, as his imagination ascribed the cause thereof to himself. He ordered Joab to take the census of the land, and though Joab reminded him that counting the people was considered an act displeasing to God, the king repeated his order. Joab obeyed and reported as the

result of his tedious work 800,000 men of war in Israel, and 500,000 in Judah. But David soon felt deep remorse in his heart on account of the order he had given, and prayed to God for forgiveness. And the prophet Gad came to David in the name of God, offering him the choice of three modes of decimating the people: a seven years' famine, a three months flight before his enemies, or a three days' pestilence. The king, having had sufficient experience of the horrors of the two former, chose the last-named evil, saying:

"I am in great distress; let us rather fall into the hand of God, for His mercies are great, but let me not fall into the hand of man."

After the raging pestilence had snatched away 70,000 of the people from morning until evening, David prayed to God saying: "I have sinned, O God, let Thy hand, O Eternal, be against Thy servant." And God listened to the fervent prayer of David, and the pestilence ceased. David, thanking God, builded an altar and offered sacrifices.

"Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people."—Lev. xix. 18.

"He that concealeth his transgressions will not prosper, but who confesseth and forsaketh them will obtain mercy."—Prov. xxviii. 13.

"Nigh is the Eternal unto all those who call on him, to all who call on him in truth."—Ps. cxlv. 18.

XXIV. ADONIJAH.—SOLOMON.

After the suppression of the revolt or Sheba, David enjoyed for several years that undisturbed quiet which he needed so much. With the approach of old age

his peace of mind became somewhat interrupted by his son Adonijah, who, counting on the wonted indulgence of his father, conspired for his throne. "I shall be king!" he haughtily said, and to give strength to his words, he possessed himself with chariots, horses, and a bodyguard of fifty men. Joab and the priest Abiathar favored his plan, and lent him their assistance. Adonijah now prepared a great feast out of the city, and invited thereto all his brothers, the men of Judah, and the servants of the king, except his brother Solomon, the mighty men of his father, and the prophets Nathan and Benaiah.

Nathan, therefore, called on Bathsheba, urging her to repair immediately to the king's palace and claim of him her right. She thereupon reverentially approached the king, and said: "Thou, my lord, O king, didst swear unto thy handmaid, saying: 'Thy son Solomon shall reign after me,' and now Adonijah is conspiring after the throne of my lord the king, at a feast to which he has just now called many of my lord's subjects except thy maiden's son, Solomon." And while she was speaking to the king the prophet Nathan entered, corroborating her statements.

Then David said: "As the Eternal liveth, as I did swear, so shall it be. Solomon, my son, shall reign after me, and inherit my throne."

Bathsheba then, bowing low, exclaimed: "Long live my lord, the king!" And Benaiah approached the king, saying: "May God be with Solomon, even as He has been with thee, and may his throne become even more exalted than the throne of my lord the king."

David thereupon sent word to Zadok the priest, saying: "Take with you the servants of the king, and

cause Solomon my son to ride upon my own mule, and conduct him down to Gishon, and thou and Nathan anoint him there as king over Israel, and then blow the trumpet and exclaim: "Long live King Solomon!"

The order of the king was minutely carried out, and the deafening, joyful outburst of the multitude present filled the air and reached the ears of the guests, just returning from Adonijah's feast.

And as the real cause thereof became known to them, they were all seized with terror. While the guests, dismayed, were wandering toward their homes, Adonijah sought refuge at the corner of the altar. Solomon being advised thereof said: "If he will be a worthy man not a hair of his shall fall to the earth, but if any wrong should be found with him, then he shall surely die."

Adonijah, however, secretly continued in his treacherous plans. Soon after the death of his father, he and his assistant Joab were slain, while the third in their party, the priest Abiathar, was banished.

"He that withholdeth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chastiseth him betimes."—Prov. xiii. 24.

"Haughtiness of the eyes and an immoderate heart are the sinful field of the wicked."—Prov. xxi. 4.

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell closely together (in union)."—Ps. cxxxiii. 1.

"Do not say, 'I will recompense evil,' wait on the Eternal, and he will help thee."—Prov. xxi. 24.

XXV. DAVID'S DEATH.

When David felt that the end of his life was drawing nigh he assembled the princes of the tribes, the people of Jerusalem, and his son Solomon, and urged them

to remain true to their God by strictly obeying His laws. He then said: "I was not deemed worthy to satisfy my heart's desire, to build a house for the ark of the covenant, because as a warrior I have shed blood; but I am consoled in God's promise that my son Solomon shall accomplish that sacred work. Therefore, thou, my son Solomon, know the God of thy father, and serve Him with an entire heart and a willing soul; for God searcheth the heart and the thoughts of men; if thou seekest Him, thou wilt find Him, but if thou shouldst forsake Him, He will cast thee off."

And as David at this solemn instance saw in his mind the grand plan of the sanctuary which his son was to rear, and as he beheld in readiness the rich material of gold, silver, copper, brass, etc., which he and the people so lavishly and willingly had provided, then he said: "Blessed be Thou, O Eternal, our Father, from eternity to eternity. Thine, O God, are greatness, might, glory and victory; riches and honor come from Thee; it is in Thy hand to make great and strong. And all this abundant store, which we have prepared to build a house for Thy holy name, is out of Thy hand. Therefore we give thanks unto Thee and pray: preserve forever this people and direct their hearts firmly unto Thee. And to my son Solomon grant Thou a true and willing heart, to fulfill Thy will and to keep Thy commandments."

Amidst numerous sacrifices and praises to God, the people for a second time proclaimed Solomon as their king, and giving and receiving blessings they departed in peace.

The last moments of the aged king now approached. He once more addressed his son Solomon, saying: "I

am soon to go the way of all mortals, and Thou art destined to fill my place. Be thou, therefore, strong and become a man. Walk in the ways of God, observe His ordinances, statutes and laws, that thou mayest prosper in all thine undertakings." And having thus charged his son, King David peacefully passed away. His rule in Israel extended over a period of forty years. Seven years he reigned in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem.

NOTE.—The life of David was a continuous struggle from its beginning to its very close. Judging him mildly, though impartially, by the various incidents of his long career, he stands before us a grand, imposing figure. We admire in him the plain but courageous shepherd, the skilled musician and poet, the heroic champion, the successful general, the true friend, the faithful servant, the noble king, the loving, tender and forbearing father; and were it not that in an unlucky moment he became enslaved by a momentary passion, which led him to the committal of a most heinous crime, he would stand even to-day unrivalled in history. But even then, unlike the majority of men in power, he soon confessed and repented his great sin through the most sincere outpourings of his heart. (Ps. li.)

As proofs of his true religious feelings and his desire to improve the moral standard of his time and to raise the heart of the people to God, we may point to his many songs of penitence, praise and gratitude to God, which form a prominent portion of that book of Scriptures which bears his name (Psalms of David), and which will ever remain a living source of consolation and elevation, both in private and public worship, to innumerable people of all the various denominations;

we may recall his inclination to build a house of worship, and his farewell address to the people and to his son Solomon.

“An ornamental crown is the hoary head, on the way of righteousness is it to be found.”—Prov. xvi. 31.

“The righteous, even in his death, has confidence.”—Prov. xiv. 32.

XXVI. SOLOMON.

After the death of King David, his son Solomon ascended the throne. He faithfully tried to follow the instructions of his father, and deeply meditated how he could best please God and the people. Thus in a dream he perceived the voice of God, saying: “Ask for anything and I will give it to thee,” whereupon he answered: “O Eternal God, Thou hast designed thy servant to fill his father’s place; but I am young and inexperienced, would Thou but give me a heart of wisdom to judge between right and wrong, between good and evil.” And in his vision he heard the reply of God: “Because thou hast asked but for this, I shall endow thee with wisdom, and add to thy lot even riches, and honor, and long life.” On awaking from his dream, Solomon offered sacrifices to God and prepared a feast for his attendants.

Solomon soon had opportunity to prove his deep wisdom and great sagacity. Two mothers approached his throne to ask his judgment. “We both,” began one of them, “occupy the same house. Each of us had a new-born child. And now it happened that the child of this woman died during the night, having been choked by laying upon it. She thereupon took my living child, while I was fast asleep, from my side, and

placed her dead one into my arms." The other woman in her turn totally denied this, and claiming the living child her own, preferred the same charges against her neighbor.

The king had attentively listened to these extraordinary criminal charges, and after some reasonable consideration he said: "Both of you claim the living child as your own. In the absence of any other testimony, and in order to be just to both of you, it is my judgment that the living child be divided into two equal halves, and each of you take one of them." At the same time the king energetically exclaimed: "Fetch the sword!" At this instant the heart of the real mother became moved with love and pity, and she imploringly exclaimed: "O my lord and king, spare the child and give it to her!" This ingenious test at once revealed to the king the real mother, and he said to her: "Take the child, for thou art its rightful mother."

The decision of the young king spread far and wide, and his renown became firmly established. From distant countries people came to his court with the richest presents, and with the assurances of their friendship sought his counsel. Such a favorable opinion toward the new king in Israel had the glorious effect of upholding harmony between the tribes, as well as securing peace and good-will from without, so that his kingdom was soon well established from the river Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and the borders of Egypt.

"There should be a wise sentence on the lips of the king, his mouth should never commit a trespass in judging."—Prov. xvi. 10.

"It is much better to obtain wisdom than gold, and to obtain understanding is preferable to silver."—Prov. xvi. 16.

“When the Eternal receiveth in favor a man’s ways, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”—Prov.xvi.7.

XXVII. SOLOMON BUILDING THE TEMPLE.

Solomon’s reverence toward God and his feeling of love and duty toward his people inspired him to apply his days of undisturbed peace to the material and moral welfare of his subjects. Through wise treaties with foreign nations he promoted the commerce of the land, and through his numerous literary productions of proverbs, songs and parables he provided spiritual nourishment for the moral and intellectual culture, not only of Israel, but of the world at large.

Upon Solomon’s petition, in his reply to the congratulatory message of Hiram, King of Tyre, that sovereign assented to assist him with workmen and materials in his great undertaking in the building of the temple to the God of Israel, while Solomon in return yielded to Hiram’s request of providing his house with wheat and oil. Both contracting parties honestly consummated their respective agreements, so that Solomon received skilled workmen and all the required cedar and fir timber from Hiram, while he sent him yearly 20,000 measures of wheat and 20 measures of pure oil. To have some idea of the immense work which was to be done, let it be mentioned that Solomon levied from his people 30,000 men, of whom 10,000 at the time had to work for one month in the forest of Lebanon; besides 70,000 laborers and 80,000 stone-cutters, all of whom were directed by 3,300 overseers. All the material received its proper size and shape before it reached the sacred place, so that neither ax nor hammer was heard

in the house while under construction. The plan of the building was the same as that of the Tabernacle, but of twice its dimensions (60 cubits long, 20 broad, and 30 high; the cubit over $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet). All its sacred vessels, and the altar, and candlesticks were to be of pure gold, and even the walls were to be covered with gold. While Solomon was thus engaged in his great undertaking, he perceived within his heart the word of God: "I find pleasure in the work which thou art about to perform; therefore, if thou wilt obey my laws and observe my statutes, then I shall fulfill the promise which I have made to thy father David: I shall dwell among the children of Israel, and never forsake my people."

"The Rock—his work is perfect; for all his ways are just; the God of truth and without iniquity, just and upright is he."—Deut. xxxii. 4.

"If ye walk in my statutes and if you keep my commandments, then I will give you rain in due season, the earth shall yield her products, and the tree of the field its fruit, and I will give peace in the land, and ye shall dwell therein in safety."—Lev. xxvi. 3-6.

XXVIII. DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE.

It was in the fourth year of his reign, which was the 480th after the redemption of Israel from Egypt, that Solomon, upon the Mt. Moriah, had laid the foundation of the magnificent structure which, after seven years of continued labor, was ready for dedication to its sacred purpose. He, therefore, assembled the elders of the people, the princes of the tribes, and all Israel to witness and to assist in the solemn ceremonies of the day, and to give praise and thanks to Him who is the cause of all success.

A grand procession, in which the priests and the Levites carried the Tabernacle and the holy ark from Mount Zion, opened the interesting ceremony. After the ark containing the two tablets of stone had been deposited in the Holy of Holies, Solomon took his stand before the altar, and with uplifted eyes and outspread hands he prayed: "O Eternal God, there is no God like Thee in the heavens above or on the earth beneath. Thou keepest Thy covenant and Thy kindness for Thy servants that walk before Thee with all their heart. Behold, the heavens and heavens of heaven can not contain Thee, how much less this house that I have built? Yet Thou wilt turn Thy regard to the prayers of Thy servant, and listen to his entreaties, that Thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, and thou wilt hear the supplications of Thy servants which they will offer at this place, and deal with them in accordance with Thy great justice. If oppressed by enemies, if impoverished by famine, or if visited by pestilence, the prayers of the sorrow-stricken from a deep penitent heart ascend Thy throne, then Thou in Thy mercy do hear them, and grant them pardon and relief. And if a stranger who is not of Thy people Israel, trusting in Thy greatness, enters this house to seek Thy presence, do Thou in Thy mercy graciously listen to his prayer, and grant him his request."

Solomon then, turning toward the assembly, blessed them, and said: "Blessed be God who has given rest unto His people; may the Eternal be with us, as He has been with our fathers, and may He incline our hearts unto Him, to walk in all His ways, so that all nations of the earth may know and acknowledge that the Eternal is the true God, and none else."

Solomon and all the people now offered numerous sacrifices, and feasting and joy prevailed. With blessings upon their lips and good wishes in their hearts for one another, the people then went homeward happy and satisfied. And Solomon perceived the voice of God within his heart saying: "I have heard thy prayer, and I have hallowed the house which thou hast built to put my name there forever. But that thou wilt walk before me in integrity of heart and do as I have commanded thee."

XXIX. SOLOMON'S WEALTH AND GREATNESS

(CONTINUED).

After the dedication of the temple, Solomon was for many years engaged in building cities and fortifying others, and in rearing palaces for himself and his queens.

Conspicuous among the palaces, both in style of architecture and ornamental splendor, was the one erected in the forest of Lebanon, with its throne of gold and ivory. A merchant fleet built for him by skilled shipwrights of Tyre, at the seaport of Eziongeber, and manned by practical seamen, made long voyages to the eastern coast of Arabia and other noted seaports, and returning, brought gold, silver, ivory, precious stones, spices, plants, horses and linen in great abundance.

Solomon's great name and wisdom, as well as the report of his immense wealth and splendor, attracted many foreign sovereigns to visit his court and to present him with their choicest treasures. Even the Queen of Sheba, from the far south of the Arabian Gulf, with

a caravan of camels, laden with precious treasures, set out for Jerusalem to honor Solomon by a royal visit. Offering her greetings and her rich gifts, she asked the king such important questions as she desired to be enlightened upon. Solomon answered all of them to her entire satisfaction and admiration. And as she was shown the splendor and the great treasures of his state, and the house that he had built, then she said: "Truly, O king, thy wisdom, greatness and riches have surpassed my liveliest imagination and expectations. Blessed be the Eternal, thy God, who has had delight in thee, to place thee on the throne of Israel."

Satisfied, and presented in return with rich presents by Solomon, the queen, with her best wishes for his continued success, bade him farewell and departed.

XXX. SOLOMON'S DECLINE AND DEATH.

The modern proverb, "Do not praise the day before the approach of the evening," so truly vindicated by our daily experience, found its saddest realization, even in the life of Solomon. The wise and renowned King of Israel, Solomon, the so much favored by God and men, came to fall before the end of his days. His imposed heavy taxes on the people to defray the cost of his expensive state, and his continuous levy on them to do his work, caused their serious dissatisfaction and murmuring. By his following the oriental custom of kings, in taking numerous wives, in contradiction to the law of Moses, his heart became estranged from his God. Many of these wives, as the daughter of Pharaoh, being heathens, and practicing idolatry, they succeeded in persuading him to erect temples in which sacrifices

were offered to Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, to Chemosh, the god of Moab, and to Moloch, the abomination of Ammon. Therefore God appeared to Solomon, and in his heart he perceived His voice saying: "I will rend the kingdom from thee and give it to one of thy servants; but on account of the piety of thy father David, the rupture shall not occur in thy days, but in the days of thy son, who shall follow thee; but one tribe shall remain with him (The little tribe of Benjamin was considered as absorbed in that of Judah.)

Almost at the same time the prophet Ahija, in the name of God, informed Jeroboam, one of Solomon's officers, from the tribe of Ephraim, that he was to become king over ten of the tribes of Israel, and that, if he would walk in the ways of God, his kingdom should endure. Solomon thereupon sought to destroy Jeroboam, but he fled, and sought and found protection at the court of the Egyptian King Shishak, with whom he remained during Solomon's lifetime. As the end of his existence drew nigh, Solomon must have keenly felt his folly, as well as the vanity of all earthly possessions. After a reign of forty years (975 prior to the present era) he was gathered to his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.

"Thus said the Eternal: 'Let not the wise glorify himself in his wisdom, neither the mighty in his might, nor the rich in his riches, but let him that glorifieth himself glory in this that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Eternal, exercising kindness, justice, and righteouness on the earth, and that but in these things I delight.'—Jerem. ix. 22.

"Make no boast for thyself of the coming day, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."—Prov. xxvii. 1.

"There is many a way which seemeth even before a man, but its end are ways unto death."—Prov. xiv. 12.

“Trust in the Eternal with all thy heart, and upon thine own understanding do not rely. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will make level thy path. Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Eternal, and depart from evil.”—Prov. iii. 5, 6, 7.

BIBLICAL HISTORY.

PART V.

I. REHOBAM (984).

(1 Kings 12.)

The successor of Solomon was his son Rehoboam.

Soon after the people had proclaimed him their king at Shechem, they recalled Jeroboam from Egypt, and with him they waited on their new king, entreating him to relieve them of the heavy taxes which his father had imposed upon them. Rehoboam listened attentively, and promised to render his decision after three days. He then consulted the old experienced and tried men of his father, and they prudently advised him to yield to the wishes of the people, so that he might the more easily win and retain their confidence and goodwill.

Not so far-seeing and kindly disposed were the counselors of the king's own age, whose opinion he likewise asked. They held, and so advised the king, that he could uphold his authority and gain the respect and the submission of the people but by severity. Rehoboam acted on their advice, and when the people reappeared before him, to learn the result of his considerations, he said unto them: "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will make it still heavier. If my

father has chastised you with whips, I will chastise you with scorpions (whips with sharp thorns or iron nails).

Disappointed and angry, the people withdrew from the presence of the king, and the agitators' cry for rebellion readily re-echoed in the hearts of many. "What portion or inheritance have we in David?" shouted the ungrateful. They concluded to resist the authority of the king; and when his tax-collector, Adoram, in his official tour, called on them, they met him with stones, and put him to death.

The alarm of open rebellion was rapidly spreading, soon followed by the secession of ten of the tribes, who proclaimed Jeroboam as king over Israel; but the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin remained faithful to their king, and formed the kingdom of Judah.

On hearing the terrible reports, Rehoboam speedily fled to Jerusalem, and assembled 180,000 chosen warriors from his two remaining faithful tribes, to make war against the new kingdom, and to reduce its subjects to his rule. But at this instant Shemajah, the man of God, appeared before him, saying: "Thus saith the Eternal, 'You shall not fight with your brethren, the children of Israel, for from me has this thing been brought about.'" And Rehoboam hearkened to the word of God through Shemajah, and sent the people to their homes.

"He that walketh with wise men will become wise, but he that associates with fools will be destroyed." — Prov. xiii. 20.

"By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh bones." — Prov. xxiii. 15.

NOTE.—The division of the kingdom was of the saddest consequences to the welfare of the people of both factions. It gave

rise to constant contentions among themselves, it weakened their respect in the eyes of their neighbors, and led to idolatry, vice, and crimes which finally caused their destruction.

THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.

II. JEROBOAM.

(1 Kings 12, 13, 14.)

Jeroboam was the first king in the kingdom of Israel.

Besides the city of Shechem, which was his capital, he fortified other cities to guard against a possible invasion from Rehoboam. But he soon forgot his God, by whose will he was raised to the throne. Being troubled in his mind lest the people, at their regular meetings at Jerusalem, might repent having seceded, and re-unite again with their brethren, he erected temples on the heights of Bethel and Dan, adorned them with golden calves, and invited the people to worship there saying: "Ye have long enough gone up to Jerusalem; these are thy Gods, O Israel, who have brought thee up from Egypt;" and he either himself attended to the priestly functions, or had them attended to by men who were not of the tribe of Levi. He even changed the lawful time of the feast of booths, from the fifteenth day of the seventh month to that date of the eighth month, though only ignorance and the desire for convenience could have made the people yield to these unlawful innovations.

Once, as Jeroboam stood at the altar at Bethel, a man of God, from Judah, appeared before him, saying: "Thus saith the Eternal: 'A descendant of David shall sacrifice thy priests upon this altar.'" Jeroboam, raising his hand toward the man, cried: "Lay hold on him!" But at that instant the king's hand became

withered up, and the altar fell down. "Pray for me," now begged the wicked and repentant sinner. The man of God yielded to his entreaty, and the king's hand became restored as before.

Soon thereafter, Jeroboam's son, Abijah, suddenly fell dangerously sick, and, having no confidence in his own priests, he sent his wife in disguise to the prophet Ahijah, at Shiloh to learn the fate of the child. As she approached the prophet, he said to her: "Return, thou wife of Jeroboam, and tell him, Thus says the Eternal: 'On account of thy great wickedness, evil shall pursue thy house unto destruction; and, as to thy child, he will expire when thy foot reaches the city.'" And, as the prophet had predicted, so it happened. After a reign of twenty-two years, Jeroboam died, and he slept with his fathers.

"Cursed be the man that trusteth in man and placeth on flesh his dependence, while from the Eternal his heart departeth." — Jerem. xvii. 5.

"The man of violence misleadeth his neighbor, and maketh him go on a way which is not good." — Prov. xvi. 29.

III. THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.

(1 Kings 15, 16, 17.)

1. JEROBOAM (984-962).
2. NADAB (962-960) succeeded his father Jeroboam, and followed his evil ways.

In the second year of his reign, while at war with the Philistines, and laying siege to Gibbethon (a city occupied by them, but assigned to the Levites), he was slain, and was succeeded by one of his own officers, named

3. BAASHA (960-936), of the tribe of Issachar. He made Thirza his royal residence, did evil in the

eyes of God, and, after a reign of twenty-four years, was followed by his son

4. ELAH (936-934), who, after a reign of two years, was slain, and succeeded by his servant
5. ZIMRI (934), who, though enjoying the fruits of his conspiracy but for seven days, caused immense mischief. He slew the entire house of Baasha, and when he heard that the army, then laying siege to Gibbethon, disgusted by his conspiracy and his wholesale slaughter, had proclaimed their captain (Omri) as king, he retired to his palace, set it on fire, and perished in the flames.
6. OMRI (934-922) contended for six years against TIBNI, whom one portion of the people had made their king, but after that time, his opponent having been slain, he remained for another six years king in Israel. He built the city of Samaria on a hill in the Mt. Ephraim, which place he had bought of Shemer. This city became, and ever remained, the capital of the kingdom of Israel. Omri died, and was buried in Samaria, and was succeeded by his son
7. AHAB (922-900).

IV. AHAB (922-900).

(1 Kings 16, 17.)

Ahab was one of the most sinful and wicked of the kings of Israel. Idolatry, under his rule, was more prevalent than ever before. To please his wife Jezebel, a daughter of the Sidonian king Ethbaal, he built a temple to Baal, sacrificed to that idol, ordered the prophets of God to be slain, and appointed in their

stead 450 priests of Baal and 400 prophets of the grove. One hundred of God's prophets, however, escaped, through the assistance of the God-fearing Obadiah, Governor of Ahab's house, who hid them in caves and sustained them with food, during the dangers that threatened them.

Then the prophet Elijah appeared before Ahab with the message from God, saying: "As the Eternal liveth, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, lest by my word." Having thus spoken, Elijah fled and stopped at the brook Cherith, east of the Jordan, where, by God's special providence, the ravens furnished him with food. On account of want of rain, however, the brook dried up, and Elijah left that place, and wandered toward Zarephath (a Phœnician city). As he entered the city he met a woman gathering wood, and addressing her, he said: "Pray, fetch me some bread and water." But she replied: "As the Eternal liveth, I have nothing but a handful of meal and a little oil in my house, and I am just gathering some wood to prepare some food for myself and my son." And the prophet said: "Fear not, for it is the will of the Eternal that neither the meal nor the oil shall fail thee, until there be plenty again in the land. Go and do as I have told thee." The good woman obeyed, and behold, God, who rewards every kind act, blessed the meal in the bag and the oil in the jar, in accordance with the prophet's word, so that the woman, her son, and her guest, had plenty to live on for many days. But even in another way was the woman rewarded for her kindness and her trust in God. When her only son fell dangerously sick, she found in Elijah a faithful friend. He took

the sick child into his room, and by his constant care and nursing and his fervent supplications to God to spare the child, he succeeded in leading the child, restored to health, into the arms of his anxious mother. "Now do I know," shouted the overjoyed woman, "that thou art a man of God, and that His words in thy mouth are truth."

"He that sacrifices to any god, save unto the Eternal only, shall be utterly destroyed." — Ex. xxii. 19.

"The eyes of all wait hopefully upon thee, and thou givest them their food in due season. Thou openest thy hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." — Ps. clxv. 15-16.

"Cast thy burden upon the Eternal, and he will sustain thee." — Ps. lv. 23.

"God is our protection and strength, a help in distress, readily found." — Ps. xlv. 2.

V. ELIJAH UPON THE MT. CARMEL.

(1 Kings 18.)

Almost three years had elapsed since dew or rain had moistened the earth. Famine was sore in the land, and Ahab was among the suffering. Reduced to despair, he and Obadiah traversed the land in search of some herbs and water. At last God in His mercy sent Elijah to Ahab, to announce to Ahab the termination of the drought.

Ahab had again and again inquired and searched after Elijah to slay him, but when he saw him fearlessly standing before him, he was satisfied with reproaching him, saying: "Art thou he who troubleth Israel?" Elijah answered: "Not I, but thou and thy father's house have caused this trouble, by having forsaken the true God, and having followed after Baal. Assemble now all Israel and the prophets of Baal upon Mt. Carmel."

Ahab obeyed, and when they had all assembled, Elijah earnestly and decidedly said: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Eternal is God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him. Silence followed these words; and Elijah continued: "I am the only remaining prophet of God, while those of Baal are 450. Let them prepare a sacrifice without fire and call on their gods, and then I will do the same and call on my God: and the God that answereth by fire, let Him be the true God." And the assembled people cried: "Well spoken." The prophets of Baal, on account of their number, had to try first. They prepared an altar, dressed a bullock, and cried from morning till noon, saying: "Baal, hear us." But there was no answer. Elijah then said: "Cry louder, perhaps your god is talking or sleeping." So the prophets continued to cry with their loudest voices, leaped wildly around the altar, and wounded themselves with lances and knives, but all in vain, there was no answer to their appeals.

Then Elijah came forward, built an altar, made a wide and deep ditch around it, dressed a bullock, laid it upon the wood, and had so much water poured over it that even the ditch was overflowing. He then fervently prayed: "O Eternal, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant. Answer me, O, Eternal, hear me, and then Thou wilt have turned the hearts of this people back again."

Scarcely had Elijah spoken these words, when fire fell from heaven, and consumed the offering and even dried up the water in the ditch. On beholding this, the people prostrated themselves, and loud and long they shouted: "The Eternal, He is God." יי הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים

By the word of Elijah, the people led the priests of Baal to the brook Kishon, and there they slew them.

Soon thereafter, the heaven became covered with dark clouds which emptied their rich treasure upon the thirsty earth, to the relief of the king and the people.

“O Eternal, in the morning do thou hear my voice; in the morning will I set in order (my prayer) before thee and look up hopefully; for thou art not a God that delightest in wickedness: evil cannot abide with thee; the arrogant cannot stand up before thy eyes, thou hatest all workers of iniquity.” — Ps. v. 4, 5, 6.

“Thou wilt rejoice all those that trust in thee; forever they will shout for joy when thou protectest them, they that love thy name will exult in thee.”— Ps. v. 12.

VI. ELIJAH'S FLIGHT.

(1 Kings 19.)

When Jezebel heard of the slaughter of her prophets, she openly threatened the life of Elijah. He thereupon fled into the wilderness, and resting himself in a shady place, he besought God to gather him to his fathers. Exhausted and fatigued, he fell asleep, when he heard an angel's voice, saying: “Rise and eat.” Awakening from his slumber, he found a cake and a cruse of water at his side, of which he partook. Thus strengthened and refreshed, he wandered a great distance, until he had reached Mount Horeb. While meditating in his loneliness on the righteous deeds which he had performed for the improvement of his people, as well as on his sad experiences and wearisome travels to escape from danger, a grand vision passed his spiritual eye, symbolizing his character in contradistinction to the wise, merciful, and quiet ways of God. A fierce wind came, tearing the rocks asunder; an earthquake followed, violently shaking the desert;

then fire broke forth, illuminating the air, but God was in none of them. At last, amidst perfect silence, he perceived God's softened voice, saying: "Return to thy post; anoint Hazael as king of Syria, Jehu as king of Israel, and Elisha as prophet in thy stead."

Encouraged by this marvelous vision, Elijah left his resting-place, and soon met a man ploughing in his field. The appearance of the man must have struck Elijah agreeably, for he threw his mantle over him.

This man was Elisha, who, understanding this peculiar sign, asked Elijah's permission to bid farewell to his father and mother. His request being granted, he took leave of his parents, followed his master, and became his faithful pupil.

"I will thank thee, that I am fearfully and wonderfully made marvelous are thy works, my soul is well aware of it." — Ps cxxxix. 14.

VII. NABOTH.

(1 Kings 21.)

Naboth, a man of Jezreel, owned a vineyard next to king Ahab's palace. Being desirous of adding this piece of land to his own, Ahab offered Naboth either another and better one, or its value in money. But Naboth declined both offers, on the ground that the vineyard was an inheritance from his father, with which he could not part. This answer so grieved the king that he refused to eat and drink. When Jezebel learned the nature of his grief, she said to him: "Art thou king in Israel? and dost thou allow thyself to be thus treated? I will secure to thee the desired vineyard."

She thereupon procured false witnesses, who publicly accused Naboth of having blasphemed God and the king. The plot succeeded; the innocent Naboth suffered death, and Ahab became the owner of the vineyard. On visiting it to enjoy its sight, Ahab was met by Elijah, who accosted him, saying: "Thus saith the Eternal, thou hast murdered, and now thou wilt be heir too. At the place where the dogs have licked the blood of Naboth, there they will lick thy blood also, and they shall consume Jezebel at the walls of Jezreel." The verdict of the prophet awakened the deepest sorrow in the breast of Ahab, but as he predicted, so it afterwards befell.

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house." — Exod. xx. 14.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." — Exod. xx. 13.

VIII. AHAB'S WAR WITH BEN HADAD.

(1 Kings 20.)

Ben Hadad, king of Syria, with his own mighty army and thirty-two tributary rulers, came into the land of Israel to make war against Ahab. He laid siege to Samaria, and sent officers to Ahab, to demand his silver and gold, his wives and children. The sin-burdened Ahab was so seized by fear that he promised to concede to the king's conditions; but when Ben Hadad's second message reached him, requiring undisturbed control of the property of his officers and servants, then Ahab, on the advice of his elders, refused to yield. Ben Hadad then sent him word, saying: "May the gods punish me, if the dust of Samaria shall be sufficient to fill the hands of my men." And Ahab sent him this significant reply: "Let not

him that girdeth the sword boast himself, as he that putteth it off."

At this juncture, a prophet of God advised Ahab that God would deliver his enemy into his hand. He thereupon made his preparations, and while Ben Hadad sure of victory, gave himself up to feasting and drinking, Ahab's little band fell upon his immense army and routed it. Ascribing Ahab's victory to the God of Israel, whom the Syrians held as a God of the mountains, Ben Hadad ventured afterwards a second attack on the plain, but again met with an overwhelming defeat; 100,000 of the Syrians fell in one day by the sword, and 27,000, who took refuge in the fortifications of Aphek, were crushed to death by the falling of the city's walls, probably caused by an earthquake. Ben Hadad and some of his attendants concealed themselves in the innermost part of the city, and by their advice, he appeared in sack-cloth before Ahab, praying for his life, and promising to restore the cities which his father had taken from the Israelites. Ahab deceived by these false appearances and promises, accepted his offer, spared his life, and sent him away in safety. This unwarranted leniency toward a dangerous and wicked enemy, whom God had doomed to utter destruction, caused afterwards the death of Ahab. A prophet of God had predicted to him his fate, and his own acts led to it.

"There is no restraint to the Eternal to save by means of many or by means of few." — 1 Sam. xiv. 6.

IX. AHAB'S DEATH.

(1 Kings 22.)

During a period of three years there was peace

between Israel and Syria. But when Ben Hadad, contrary to his promise, refused to give up Ramoth in Gilead, Ahab concluded to take it by force. It just then happened that Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, came on a visit to Ahab, the father-in-law of his heir. After an exchange of the friendliest greetings, Ahab requested the king of Judah to join him in attacking Ben Hadad. Jehoshaphat declared his readiness, provided the prophets were asked, to ascertain whether it was pleasing in the eyes of God. Ahab thereupon called on four hundred of his prophets, and they all advised him to go. "Is there no other prophet of God here, whom you might ask?" now said Jehoshaphat. Ahab replied: "There is Micaiah the prophet of God here, but he hates me." The prophet's advice was asked, and he, though abused and threatened, beforehand told Ahab that he would not return in peace.

Not minding the warning words of Micaiah, the two kings waged war against Ben Hadad, but with damaging results to themselves. Ahab, being struck by an arrow of the enemy, and dangerously wounded, only the utmost exertions and support of his attendants enabled him to remain afield until evening, for the encouragement of his men; but the loss of blood from his wound had so weakened him that he expired before sunset. The forces were ordered to retreat and to return to their homes. When Ahab's servants washed the blood stained cariot of their master outside of the city, dogs came near, lapping the blood-dyed water. Thus the judgment of God through Elijah became literally fulfilled. Ahabs' sinful reign extended over a period of twenty-two years.

“And he (God) will judge the world with righteousness, he shall decide for the people with equity.” — Ps. ix. 9

X. THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.—CONTINUED.

(2 Kings 1, 2.)

Ahab was succeeded by his son.

8. AHAZIAH (900–898). He pursued the ways of his father and served Baal. When sick on his bed, caused by severe injuries by all from the roof of his house, he sent messengers to Baal-Zebub, the idol of Ekron, to inquire whether he would recover. Elijah accosted them on their way with the words: “Thus saith the Eternal, Because you are sent to inquire of idols, which are not God, your king will not recover.” Bringing these words to Ahaziah, he knew by their description of the man that he was Elijah, and he sent in succession two bodies of soldiers to capture him, but in vain, for both of them were consumed by fire from heaven. Elijah at last followed another party sent after him, and there he repeated his message to the king.

Ahaziah died and was succeeded by his brother

9. JEHORAM (898–886). Though doing away with the image of Baal, he still adhered to the worship of the calf, and thus displeased God. Joined by the forces of the Judean king Jehoshaphat, and those of the king of Edom, Jehoram made war against Mesha, king of Moab, who refused to deliver the annual tribute of lambs and wool. Mesha's troops were defeated and pursued into their own land, and he himself was besieged in his capital.

Failing in his attempt to make a sally, he grew desperate, and in that mood he sacrificed his oldest son as a burnt-offering on the walls of the city. Terrified by the spectacle of that barbarous act, Jehoram and

Jehoshaphat raised the siege and returned to their homes.

XI. ELIJAH AND ELISHA.

Elisha from his first acquaintance with Elijah was and remained a faithful companion and a most ardent scholar. When Elijah felt that the end of his life was well nigh, he said to Elisha: "Pray, ask what I shall give thee, before I am taken away." And Elisha answered: "Would that a double portion of thy spirit come upon me." "A great thing is that which thou hast asked," said Elijah, "but if thou wilt be permitted to see me pass away, thou shalt have it." The latter successful career of Elisha fully proves that God had granted his petition.

As to the parting scene of Elijah's immortal spirit, the Scriptures give this glowing description: "It was on the other side of the Jordan, when Elisha suddenly saw a chariot and horses of fire, and at that awful instance, in a storm, his beloved master, dropping his mantle, ascended into the sky. 'My father, my father', cried the awe-stricken Elisha, when his friend and teacher was no more."

XII. ELISHA'S MIRACULOUS ACTS.

(2 Kings 4.)

Elisha's career of usefulness, as a true prophet of God, extended over a period of fifty years after the death of Elijah, and belongs to the reign of Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz and Joash, kings of Israel. He was ever ready to assist the suffering and to alleviate their troubles.

1. A poor widow, of a prophet family, came crying

to Elisha, saying: A heartless creditor, whom I am unable to pay, is about to take my two sons as his servants." Elisha, learning that she had but a bottle of oil, said to her: "Go and borrow from thy neighbors empty vessels and fill them from the one in thy possession; sell then the oil and pay thy creditor." The woman followed his advice, and to her surprise and joy, the oil in her own vessel did not give out, until all the empty ones were filled. She sold some of the oil, paid her debt, and had even enough left to live thereon.

"Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child." — Ex. xxii. 21.

"If thou lend money to my people, to the poor by thee, thou shalt not lay upon him usury." — Ex. xxii. 24.

2. On visiting Shunem, Elisha, considered a holy man of God, was regularly treated in a most hospitable manner by a wealthy family. They being without children, Elisha, before parting said: "God will bless your house with a son," and the prophet's word became true. After some time the youth fell dangerously sick and died on his mother's arm. The afflicted woman hastened to the prophet's abode, and implored him to follow her. The prophet consented, and on reaching the house, he took the dead boy to an upper chamber, and there fervently prayed to God to restore him to life again. He then threw himself over the cold limbs of the deceased child, when he felt that they were slowly warming up. Repeating this several times, life began gradually to return, until, after sneezing seven times, the boy opened his eyes. Elisha then called the Shunamite and said to her: "Take thy son, for he is alive."

3. During one of his visits to Gilgal, Elisha met the sons of the prophets suffering from hunger, for a famine at that time prevailed in the land. One of them had gone out and gathered some noxious herbs, of which, unconscious of their poisonous nature, he prepared food for all. Having partaken of it and discovered their danger, they cried to Elisha: "O man of God, there is poison in the pottage," but Elisha mixed the food with meal and it became harmless.

4. At another time, a man brought twenty loaves of the first barley and full ears of corn to the prophet, but he said: "Let the people have it that they may eat." And when told that this would be as nothing for hundreds of men he said: "It will satisfy all of them, and there will even be some left." And so it was.

5. Elisha considered and honored as a man of God among his own people, likewise enjoyed a high reputation among the Syrians.

Naaman, a captain of the host of the Syrian army, was a leper. A young Jewish maiden, who had been captured by the Syrians, and who was a servant in the house of Naaman, said to her mistress: "Were my lord but with the prophet of Samaria, he would surely be healed." These words were reported to Naaman, and by him to the king. Thereupon the king of Syria sent by Naaman a letter to the king of Israel, asking him to heal his servant Naaman of his leprosy.

On reading the letter, the king of Israel rent his clothes and said: "Am I God that I should heal this man? This is but a mere pretext of finding cause for quarrel." Elisha heard of it and sent word to the king saying: Let Naaman come to my house that he

may become convinced that there is a prophet in Israel. The king so directed Naaman, and he drove up to the prophet's house. Elisha by a messenger advised him, saying: "Go and bathe seven times in the river Jordan, and thou wilt be healed."

Naaman quite angry at the prophet's advice, left the place and said: "I thought he should have come out, pray to his God, and move his hand up and down over my sores;" and then he added: "Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all those of Israel?" But at last, persuaded by his attendants, he followed the prophet's advice and behold, the leprosy was thoroughly cured.

Full of gratitude he returned to the prophet and exclaimed: "Now do I know that there is no god on all the earth like the god of Israel." He then offered the prophet some of his rich presents; but he refused to receive aught and said: "Go in peace."

Not so noble-minded as his master was Gehazi, his servant. Instigated by his greed, he hurried after the Syrian and stated that he was sent by his master to get a talent of silver, and raiment for some sons of the prophets, who had just arrived. "Take two talents, I pray thee," said Naaman; and so did the servant. Having hidden his treasure, Gehazi went to his master to receive his orders, and Elisha said to him: "Whence comest thou? Was it then time to ask and to receive presents? The leprosy of Naaman come upon thee." And as he left the prophet's presence, his flesh turned leprous and white as snow.

6. It once happened that in the presence of Elisha a poor man's axe fell into the water, while at work in cutting wood. "O master," said the frightened pro-

phet's sons, "this axe is a borrowed one." Elisha threw a piece of wood into the water, and the axe came floating to the surface, so that the poor man could reach it.

7. When Elisha was on his way to Bethel, some boys of the city mocked him and repeatedly said: "Go up, bald head." But their evil conduct was severely punished; two bears came forth out of the forest and tore forty-two of them in pieces.

8. The king of Syria having recommenced hostilities against Israel, became convinced that his intended plans were made known to his opponents. Learning that such was the work of the prophet in Israel, who was just then a Dothan, he sent a strong force of horsemen to capture him. God, however, listening to the earnest entreaties of His faithful servant, smote the entire force with blindness. Elisha then told them that, by following him, he would show them the man they were in search of. He then led them to Samaria, and upon his prayer their eyes were opened, and they at once understood their dangerous situation. The king of Israel asked Elisha, saying: "Shall I smite them?" And he answered: "No; set rather bread and water before them, that they may strengthen themselves and go to their master." The Syrians were now treated to a repast, and after having fully enjoyed it, they left for their home.

"The Eternal is nigh unto all those who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. The desire of those who fear him will be fulfil and their cry will he hear and save them." — Ps. cxlv. 18, 19.

9. Ben Hadad, some time after proclaimed war against Israel. An effective and prolonged siege of

Samaria caused so extreme a famine in the city that two mothers bargained to eat alternately their own children. One of them came up to her agreement, but the other did not. The first of the women thereupon, in a furious rage, ran to the king of Israel, who on hearing her complaint rent his clothes, and threatened the life of the prophet, who long since ought to have prayed to God for the relief of the suffering. On hearing it, Elisha predicted that by to-morrow one measure of fine flour would be sold for one shekel, and two measures of barley for the same price. Upon the sarcastic remark of the king's attendant that God would make widows in heaven, Elisha said: "Thou shalt surely see it, but thou shalt not enjoy it."

In the camp of the Syrians occurred that night a great panic. In their imagination they heard the rattling and bustle of the approach of immense armies. They were terror-stricken and fled in confusion, leaving behind their rich stores of supplies. These facts were detected by four destitute lepers, who had ventured an entry into the enemy's camp, and so reported to the king of Israel. Jehoram considered this movement of the Syrians as a stratagem to capture the hosts of the Israelites, but a careful investigation soon convinced him of his error. The people now wildly rushed into the abandoned camps of the enemy, and in their throng crushed to death that very attendant of the king, who sneeringly distrusted the word of God through His prophet. The flour and the barley were sold for the price which Elisha had mentioned, the scorner was punished, and the sufferings of the people ceased.

At another time Elisha came to Damascus, when

Ben Hadad, the king of Syria was sick. Hearing of his presence, he sent to him Hazael, a high officer at his court, to inquire of the prophet as to the result of his sickness. When Hazael came in the presence of Elisha, the prophet said: "Tell thy master that he shall live, but God has shown me that he will die." Looking then more closely into his interrogator's face, Elisha weepingly said: "I know that you wilt be king of Syria and do evil to the children of Israel." Hazael in reply, alluding to his inferior station and to the improbability of such a change, left the prophet and reported to the king: "Thou shalt live." But on the next day he stifled his master with a wet cloth and then usurped the throne.

XIII. THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.—CONTINUED.

Jehoram, being wounded during a war against Hazael, returned to Jezreel for his recovery. During this time Jehu, one of his chief captains, was anointed king over Israel at Ramoth-Gilead through a messenger sent by Elisha. Soon thereafter, Jehu, with a strong force, went to Jezreel, conspiring for the throne. Jehoram who had scarcely recovered, came out to meet him in the field of Naboth, and said: "Is there peace, Jehu?" And he replied: "What peace can there be, so long as the idolatry of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcraft continue." Jehoram now turned to flee, but soon fell by the arrow of Jehu, and expired. The next king in Israel was

10. JEHU (886-858). By his order the wicked Jezebel was thrown from the window of her palace, the entire house of Ahab and all the prophets of Baal

were extirpated, and the images and temples of Baal were utterly demolished.

While Jehu thus freed Israel from the evil influences and practices of the house of Ahab and Jezebel, he still tolerated the worship of the images of the calf at Dan and Bethel. During his reign the entire country east of Jordan was taken from his domain by the Syrian king Hazael.

Jehu died after a reign of twenty-eight years and was succeeded by his son,

11. JEHOAHAZ (858-841). He too displeased God and was oppressed by the Syrians, to whom Israel became tributary. His rule lasted seventeen years and his successor was his son,

12. JOASH (841-825). In his time the prophet Elisha fell sick, and he went to visit him. On beholding the man of God on his sick bed, Joash exclaimed: "My father! my father!" On his departure Elisha predicted him a complete victory over Syria; and soon thereafter died. In three battles with the Syrians, Joash was victorious, and he retook the cities which Hazael had taken from Israel. Challenged to fight by Amaziah, king of Juda, Joash responded by the following parable: "The thistle in Lebanon sent to the cedar there, saying: 'Give thy daughter to my son as a wife'; and behold there passed by a wild beast and trod down the thistle." He then added: "Glory in thy success against Edom and keep peace. Why shouldst thou force misfortune upon thee and upon Judah?" But Amaziah would not listen to reason, and soon the two armies stood in active engagement at Bet-shemesh in Judah. Amaziah's army was defeated, and he himself was taken prisoner. Joash

forced his way to Jerusalem, pillaged the temple and the palace, and upon certain degrading conditions released the Judean king and returned to Samaria. After a reign of sixteen years he died and his son

13. JEROBOAM II. (825-784) ascended the throne. He was one of the mightiest kings in Israel, and succeeded in re-establishing the old boundary lines of his kingdom. But with the returning prosperity, vice, idolatry, haughtiness, and oppression of the poor likewise returned among the people (Hosea iv.).

It was in vain that God sent the prophets Jonah, Hosea, Joel, and Amos to rebuke their misdoings and to foretell the just chastisements which would surely befall them, should they not cease to do evil and return to the path of virtue. The people continued in their wickedness, and hastened the day of their final judgment.

XIV. JONAH.

Of the above mentioned prophets, the history of Jonah is especially interesting and instructive. His prophetic mission was not limited to Israel exclusively, but it exerted even a beneficial influence on the heathens of his time.

God sent Jonah to Nineveh, the great city, to proclaim its utter destruction within forty days, on account of the great wickedness of its inhabitants. But Jonah disobeyed the word of God, and instead of going to Nineveh, he went to Joppa and took passage in a vessel, which lay ready to go to sea. And God caused a fierce storm on the sea, which threatened to break the ship to pieces. In their anxiety, all except Jonah prayed to their gods for deliverance. His

troubled conscience did not permit him to pray, but pointed him to a secluded place in the lower part of the vessel; and there he fell asleep. The crew, though heathens, thought that there might be a great sinner on board the ship, on whose account the anger of God was kindled against them; so they concluded to cast lots. It happened that the lot fell on Jonah. Being found fast asleep by the master of the ship, he was soon aroused by that officer who said: "Why sleepest thou? Who art thou? Whence comest thou? What is thy occupation?"

And Jonah answered: "I am a Hebrew; I fear the God of heaven, who has made the sea and the dry land;" and, he added: "I have fled from the presence of God!"

When the frightened sailors heard this confession, they became still more excited and said unto him: "Why hast thou done this? What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may become calm again?" And Jonah said: "Cast me into the sea, for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." The men tried all in their power to reach land, but all their efforts were in vain. They therefore prayed to God that he may not avenge the life of Jonah on their heads, and then they threw him overboard, and the storm at once ceased.

God, in a most marvellous manner, saved Jonah from the waves. While in this perilous position, he uttered these words: "In the midst of my distress I called unto the Eternal, and He has answered me; out of the depth of the grave have I cried, and Thou hast heard my voice. For Thou has cast me into the deep, in the heart of the seas; and all Thy billows and Thy

waves have passed over me. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Eternal and my prayer came unto Thee. They that guard false vanity, forsake (the cause of) their kindness; but I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving."

Jonah, for a second time, perceived the voice of God, to go to Nineveh and execute His errand, and he obeyed. Reaching the heart of the great city he exclaimed: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

On hearing these sad tidings, the people of Nineveh wept and mourned. The king rose from his throne, divested himself of his kingly robe, and put on sackcloth. He then issued the following proclamation: "By the decree of the king and his chief men it is ordered, that neither man nor beast shall taste any food or drink. Let every man cease to do evil and call unto God with all his might." God, who desireth not the death of the sinner, but that he return from his evil ways and live, saw their earnest repentance and spared the city.

Jonah in the mean time had made himself a booth out of the city, there anxiously awaiting the terrible things which should happen. Finding himself deceived in his expectations, he said: "I know, O God, that Thou art gracious, merciful, and of great kindness; therefore I at first fled from before Thy face; and now, I beseech Thee, let me die; for it is better for me to pass away than to live." But such was not the plan of God. He had mercy on Jonah, and in His wisdom wished to convince him of the folly of thinking less of the lives of human beings, than of his own reputation as a prophet.

God therefore caused during one night a vine to grow over his booth, which afforded him a pleasant shade, and filled his heart with delight. But when on the second day that same vine by the devine will became withered, and Jonah almost fainted by the burning heat of the sun, then he again prayed to die. And he preceived the voice of God within himself, saying: "Thou art angry, Jonah, for the vine, which without thine aid grew up, and withered again; and I should not have spared Nineveh with its numerous inhabitants, and among them so many innocent children!"

"God is omniscient, just, kind, and merciful." — Ps. cxxxix. 1, 2, 4, and 7-12.

XV. THE KINGS OF ISRAEL.—CONTINUED.

Jeroboam II. reigned forty-one years, and after his death there was among the people such a disagreement in the choice of a successor to the throne that only after eleven years did his son Zachariah become their choice.

14. ZACHARIAH (773), reigned but six months, for he was slain and succeeded by
15. SHALLUM (773), who usurped and occupied the throne but for one month. He was slain and followed by
16. MENAHEM (772-762). During his reign Israel became once more tributary to the Assyrian king Pul, who only left the land after having received one thousand talents of silver, which Menahem exacted from the wealthier portion of his subjects. After a reign of ten years he died, and his son

17. PEKAHIAH (762-760) followed him. After two years he was slain and succeeded by his captain
18. PEKAE (760-740). During his reign TILGATH PILESER, king of Assyria with a mighty army came into the land, took Gilead, Galilee, and the land of Naphtali, and carried their inhabitants away into captivity. The reign of Pekah lasted twenty years, when he was slain, and about ten years later the last of the kings of Israel,
19. HOSHEA (730-72), the son of Elah ascended the throne. Though somewhat better than his predecessors, he too displeased God by his evil deeds. SHALMANESER, King of Assyria, came into the land, and made him tributary. Hoshea, however, tried to free himself, and secretly sent messengers to So, the King of Egypt, to effect a league. His conspiracy was detected, and the fact that he refused to deliver the annual tribute, as in former years, testified against him. Therefore, Shalmaneser returned with a large army, captured him and had him imprisoned. The bravery of the people, however, caused the Assyrian king to lay siege to Samaria, and only after about three years' warfare he succeeded in taking the city by storm, and leading its people into captivity in Assyria. Thus the kingdom of Israel terminated after an existence of over 254 years.

“He that sacrifices to idols shall be utterly destroyed, to God alone the honor is due.” — Exod. xxii. 19.

XVI. THE KINGS OF JUDAH.

(1 Kings 12.)

The kings of Judah were comparatively better than those of Israel, and their kingdom lasted 134 years longer than that of the latter.

1. REHOBOAM (984-967) was forty-one years old when he ascended the throne of Judah, and reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem. He soon forgot God and allowed the erection of altars and images upon the high places ; thus leading the people to sin and corruption. In the fifth year of his reign, Shishak, the king of Egypt, came to Jerusalem, pillaged the temple and the palace, and took along all the golden shields which Solomon had made. Then the prophet Shemajahu approached the king and the people, saying : "Thus said Eternal, 'Ye have forsaken me, therefore I have forsaken you, and then delivered you into the hands of Shishak.'" Rehoboam and the people humbled themselves before God saying : "God is just."
2. ABIJAM (966-964, [Abijah] his son who succeeded him, followed the example of his father. During his reign of three years, the hostile feeling between himself and Jeroboam broke out into active war, and Israel was defeated and lost Beth-el and some other neighboring towns from her territory.
3. ASA (964-923), the son of Abijam, succeeded his father. He led a life pleasing to God, and his

reign was long and prosperous. He destroyed the altars, groves, and the high places, and urged the people to worship God alone. During his reign, Zerah, the king of Ethiopia with his mighty forces marched against Judah.

Asa, trusting in God and praying for His assistance, went to meet him with a comparatively small army, and utterly defeated him.

On his return, laden with the spoils of victory, he was met by Azariah, the son of Oded, who exhorted him to abide faithfully with God. Asa thereupon assembled all the people at Jerusalem, and with solemn rites renewed the covenant of God with Israel, and they all promised obedience and constant adherence to the laws of God.

To protect his kingdom against the incursions of Basha, king of Israel, Asa sent rich presents to Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria, asking his assistance. The Seer, Hanani, however, reproved him for doing so, declaring it a breach of trust, and a want of confidence in God, when Asa, resenting such reproof, ordered him to be cast into prison. Asa reigned forty-one years, and was succeeded by his son,

4. JEHOSEPHAT (923-898). He was a wise and good king, and walked in the footsteps of his father.

Under his wise rule, idolatry was prohibited, peace prevailed, and the people received instruction in the laws of God. He appointed judges, and exhorted them justice in their decisions; "for," said he, "you judge in the presence of God, and with Him there is no injustice, nor respect of persons, nor the taking of bribes."

He placed forces in all the fortified cities, to be

prepared for any emergency that might arise ; and, on being informed that the Ammonites and Moabites were marching against him, he assembled all his people in the temple, ordered a fast, and prayed: "O Eternal, God of our fathers, Thou rulest over all the kingdoms of the earth, and with Thy hand are the power and the might, and there is none that can withstand Thee. Behold the children of Ammon and Moab come up against us, to drive us out of our inheritance. Wilt Thou execute justice on them? For there is no power in us against this great multitude, we know not what to do, but upon Thee are our eyes directed." Then came the spirit of God upon Yachaziel, the son of Zecharayahu, in the midst of the assembly and he said: "Be not afraid, ye men of Judah stand ye firm; to-morrow shall ye see the salvation of the Eternal." And all present bowed and praised God with loud voices. And God was their salvation. By the will of God, the enemies of Judah utterly destroyed each other, so that when Jehoshaphat with his men reached the battlefield, they beheld their dead bodies scattered all over the plain. With praises and thanksgiving to God they returned, richly laden with the spoils of the fallen foe. Jehoshaphat reigned twenty-five years, and his son Jehoram succeeded him.

XVII. THE KINGS OF JUDAH.—CONTINUED.

5. JEHORAM (898-890) was the successor of his father Jehoshaphat. Being married to Ahab's daughter, Athalia, he followed her evil ways and sinned against God. He wickedly slew his brothers and many of the distinguished men of his kingdom. But soon the

judgment of God overtook him. The Edomites revolted and freed themselves, the Philistines and the Arabians made incursions into Judah, carrying away all the substance of the king's house, as well as his sons and wives, and he himself became afflicted with an incurable disease, which after two years was the cause of his death. The people hated him so much that they would not bury him in the sepulchres of the kings. His rule lasted eight years.

6. **AHAZIAH** (890-889), the son of Jehoram, was the next king. He ruled but one year, for he was slain by Jehu, king of Israel.

7. **ATHALIAH**, his mother (889-882), succeeded him. That wicked woman, on learning that her son was dead, destroyed the entire royal family, except **JEHOASH**, Ahaziah's son, then but one year old, whom his aunt Jehosheba and her husband Jehoiada saved, by hiding him for six years in the temple, and watching over his safety. In the seventh year, the high-priest Jehoiada caused Athalia to be slain, and Jehoash to be crowned king, to the joy of all the people.

8. **JEHOASH** (882-842) served God faithfully in accordance with the instruction of his guardian Jehoiada, the high-priest. The images and altars of Baal were destroyed, and its officiating priest was slain. But after the death of Jehoiada, Jehoash forsook God, and sinned against him. **ZECHARIAH**, the son of Jehoiada, reproved the king on his sinful conduct, and suffered death as a consequence. Such wickedness and ingratitude did not long remain un-

punished, as Zechariah in his last moments predicted. The Syrian king Hazael invaded Judah and defeated Jehoash's army, and only returned after having received rich treasures out of the temple and the palace. Then Jehoash was visited by dangerous diseases, and at last was slain in his bed by his own servants.

(During the reign of this king, the prophet Joel delivered his admonitions, urging the sinners of Judah to true repentance. See Joel ii.)

XVIII. THE KINGS OF JUDAH.—CONTINUED.

9. AMAZIAH (842-813), the son of Jehoash, was the next king of Judah. He followed the good example of his father and walked in the ways of God. He slew the murderers of his father, sparing however, their innocent children, and attacked and subdued the Edomites. Trusting in the strength of his arms, Amaziah arrogantly sent messengers to Joash, the king of Israel, challenging him to battle. Joash ironically replied: "The thornbush in Lebanon sent to the cedar, saying, Give thy daughter to my son as a wife, and there passed along the wild beasts, and trod down the thornbush." He then earnestly added: "Thou has smitten Edom, and thy heart has lifted thee up; keep thy glory and stay at home. Why wilt thou meddle with misfortune, that thou mayest fall with Judah?" Amaziah listened not to reason and was utterly defeated and taken prisoner. Joash marched to Jerusalem, destroyed a part of the city wall, and plundered the treasures of

the temple and of the king's palace. Having given hostages, Amaziah was released, and Joash returned to his kingdom of Israel. After a reign of 29 years, Amaziah was slain by the hands of conspirators, and was succeeded by his son,

10. **UZZIAH** (813-761). He was a God-fearing, energetic and prosperous king. He subdued the Philistines, the Arabians, and the Ammonites; repaired the broken wall of Jerusalem, armed the forts with newly invented military engines, and promoted commerce with the nations. But his success and his far-reaching fame made him overbearing. He entered the sanctuary and burned incense upon the altar, in spite of the remonstrances of the priests, that it was their sole right to perform that service. Uzziah was suddenly struck with leprosy, and as a leper had to live a secluded life to the end of his days. His son Jotham attended to the affairs of the kingdom, and at the death of his father became his successor.
11. **JOTHAM** (761-745) walked in the ways of God and was prosperous in his undertakings. He strengthened the fortifications of Jerusalem, conquered the Ammonites and made them tributary to himself. His reign lasted 16 years, and his son Ahaz succeeded him.
12. **AHAZ** (745-729), contrary to the good example set by his father, led a most wicked and impious life. Instead serving God, he served Baal to whom he dedicated altars and groves. He even practised the abominable custom of the heath-

ens, by leading his son through fire. Having thus forsaken the laws of God, He abandoned him, and caused him to sustain severe losses of men and treasure by the armies of Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, who invaded the land.

The prophet Isaiah besought Ahaz to return to God, with whom alone rest victory and salvation. But the stubborn Ahaz heeded not the prophet's words. He rather sent rich presents of gold and silver from his own house and from the temple to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, imploring his assistance. That mighty ruler yielded to Ahaz's petition, and while defeating the armies of Syria and Israel, weakened and impoverished at the same time the kingdom of Judah. Ahaz's sinful rule had lasted sixteen years, when he died at the age of 36.

“Do not trust in princes, nor in the son of man with whom there is no salvation.” — Ps. cxlvi. 3.

XIX. HEZEKIAH.

13. HEZEKIAH (729–700), the son of Ahaz, ascended the throne of his father at the age of twenty-five and reigned 29 years. He was the most pious of all the kings since David. He walked in the ways of God and trusted in Him alone with a perfect heart.

His first endeavor was directed to the rescue of his subjects from the abyss of idolatry, and to lead them back to the adoration of the true God. He therefore reopened the doors of the temple, which had been

closed during the reign of his father, purified the sanctuary, and rearranged therein the regular service by the priests and Levites. He tried even to arouse the tribes of the kingdom of Israel to return to the Eternal. He invited them, through messengers, to Jerusalem, there to join in the celebration of the festival of the passover. Many answered this invitation with contempt, while many others humbly availed themselves of the offered opportunity of meeting their brethren and their God. The feast was celebrated with such solemnity and splendor, as were only witnessed in the days of Solomon. The good feelings and the religious spirit reached such a height that, after the regular seven days of the feast, the assembled multitude was permitted to continue the festivities for another week. With the blessings of the priests, the people returned to their homes, and on their way they destroyed the idols, the highplaces, the groves and altars, in accordance with the order of the king. Even the brazen serpent, which Moses had made in the wilderness, Hezekiah caused to be broken into pieces, since it had become an object of idolatrous worship. God was with Hezekiah, and he was prosperous in all his undertakings. He subdued the Philistines and retook the cities, which they had taken from Judah. He tried to free his people from the yoke of the Assyrian, and began to withhold the tribute, which his father had consented to pay. But though that mighty power, being otherwise engaged, did not at once molest him, Hezekiah soon felt its strong arm, and had to make heavy restitution.

“The fear of the Eternal is the source of life, (teaching) to avoid the snare of death.” — Prov. xiv. 27.

“Happy are they whose way is perfect, who walk in the law of God. — Ps. cxix. 1.

XX. INVASION OF JUDAH BY SENNACHERIB.

In the history of the kingdom of Israel we have learned that Shalmanesser, king of Assyria, invaded Samaria and after a three years' siege led the remnant of a kingdom under its last king Hosea into the Assyrian captivity. That disaster began and ended in the fourth and seventh year of king Hezekiah respectively. In the fourteenth year of his reign, the son and successor of the Assyrian, Sennacherib, marched his mighty armies against Judah. Hezekiah encouraged his men to resistance, saying: “Fear not these Assyrians, for we are mightier than they. They confide solely in the strong arm of flesh; our trust is in God, who can help us and fight our battles.” He then repaired the old and built new fortifications, stopped up the supplies of water, and made such other preparations as were thought necessary for effective defense.

But when the fortified places, one by one, fell into the invaders' hands, then Hezekiah felt his weakness, and his courage failed him. He sent word to Sennacherib saying: “I have failed against thee; pray do return, and I will pay any tribute, which thou mayest ask.”

Sennacherib demanded 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold (almost one and a quarter million dollars), and Hezekiah emptied all of his own and of the temple's treasures to satisfy the greedy Assyrian. The heavy tribute was accepted, but instead of with-

drawing his armies, the faithless Sennacherib advanced them toward Jerusalem, and through his chief officer Rabshakeh demanded unconditional surrender. That official, mounting the city wall, addressed the people of Judah, saying: "Be not deceived, ye men of Judah, by the false promises of Hezekiah, that God would be your deliverer. Have the gods of the nations delivered them out of the hands of the king of Assyria? Hearken not to Hezekiah, but come out and make a treaty of peace, and every one of you may live undisturbed, until I come and take you away into a land like your own, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and olive-trees."

The people listened with fear and trembling, but answered not. Hezekiah, on hearing there blasphemous words, sought refuge in the house of God, and fervently implored His assistance, saying: "O Eternal, God of Israel, Thou alone art the true God, for it is Thou, who hast made the heavens and the earth. Bend down, O Eternal, Thy ear and hear, open Thine eyes and see (our distress) and save us, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know, Thou alone art the true God." He then sent messengers to the prophet Isaiah, asking his prayer in behalf of Judah

XXI. SENNACHERIB'S DEATH.

The prophet Isaiah sent word to Hezekiah, saying: "Thus saith the Eternal, the God of Israel, I have heard the prayer; Sennacherib shall not come into the city, nay, he even shall not shoot an arrow thereon, but he shall return by the same way on

which he came." In the same night a terrible pestilence broke out among the Assyrians, and on the next morning there were found 185,000 dead bodies scattered about their camps. Thereupon Sennacherib returned to Niniveh, when two of his sons slew him, in one of his temples, while lying prostrate in prayer before an idol. Shortly thereafter Hezekiah fell dangerously sick. The prophet Isaiah visited him and said: "Arrange thine affairs, for thou shalt die." Overcome by this intelligence, Hezekiah prayed to God, saying: "O Eternal, I beseech Thee, remember that I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done what is good in Thine eyes."

Hezekiah's tears and prayers had reached the mercy-seat of God. To his joy he soon beheld the prophet returning, with a second message, saying: "Thou shalt be healed; God has heard thy prayer, and added to thy life fifteen years."

Remedies applied by Isaiah speedily subdued Hezekiah's inflammation, and after three days he had recovered.

On hearing of his recovery, Merodach Baladon, king of Babylon, sent a letter of congratulation to him, together with many rich presents. Hezekiah, proud of receiving such distinction, courteously received the embassy, and showed them all the treasures of his house. This act of Hezekiah, however, was exceedingly displeasing in the eyes of God. The prophet Isaiah appeared before the king, saying: "Hear the word of the Eternal: 'Behold, the days are coming, when all thy possessions shall be wrested from thee, and thy sons shall be taken away and carried to Baby-

lon, to become servants in the palace of the king.'"
And Hezekiah replied: "The Eternal is gracious and just: there will be peace and stability in my days."*

After a reign of twenty-nine years Hezekiah died.

XXII. MENASSEH.

14. MENASSEH (700-645) at the age of twelve ascended the throne of his father Hezekiah. He led a most wicked life, such as none of the kings before him had led. He raised altars for Baal and for the worship of the heavenly bodies; he set up a hewn image of the Astarte in the house of God; he caused his sons to pass through fire in honor of Moloch, and he introduced the abominable customs of observing times, employing enchantments, using witchcraft, and inquiring of familiar spirits and wizards. Idolatry in Judah actually surpassed that practised by the heathens, and led to the most atrocious crimes indulged in by the king and the people.

Then the prophets of God, with their messages, approached Menasseh saying: "Thus saith the Eternal: 'I will bring evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, which shall cause the ears of those, who hear of it, to tingle. I will wipe off Jerusalem, as one wipeth off a dish and turneth it on its face; and I will give her people as a prey and a spoil to their enemies.'"

The timely warnings of the prophets were not

* A unique utterance of devotion and submission tinted with selfishness.

heeded, and the evils foretold soon followed. Judah was invaded by Assyria, and Mennasseh fell into the hands of her captains, who put him in chains and brought him to Babylon.

In his distress, at last, Menasseh became conscious of his wicked misdoings humbled himself before the God of his fathers, and fervently prayed for forgiveness; and the merciful God listened to his prayer. Menasseh was released, and on his return to Jerusalem felt and acknowledged that the Eternal is the true and only God. He then removed the altars and the images from the house of God, and cast them out from the city; he rebuilt the altar of God, offered sacrifices, and ordered all his people to pray and sacrifice to the living God alone, and to none other besides Him. Menasseh died after a disgraceful reign of fifty-five years, and was succeeded by his son Amon.

“As I live, saith the Eternal, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but desire that he returns from his way and live.” — Exek. xxxiii. 2.

XXIII. THE KINGS OF JUDAH.—CONTINUED.

15. AMON (645–642) succeeded his father Menasseh, and followed his evil ways. After a reign of two years he fell the victim of a conspiracy of his servants in his own house. The people, however, revenged his death by slying the murderers.
16. JOSIAH (642–611), Amon's son, eight years old, succeeded his father. He was a kind-hearted and religiously inclined youth. He soon became imbued with a sense of his responsibility,

under the guardianship and excellent training of the high-priest Hilkiah. It was his earnest endeavor to bring back the people to the service of God. In his twelfth year, he commanded that Jerusalem be purged of its idolatries. He afterwards made a journey to complete the destruction of the groves and high places, extending his operations even beyond his own dominions to the territories, formerly inhabited by the tribes of Ephraim, Menasseh, Zebulun, and Naphthali.

After having collected the necessary means by contributions, he undertook to repair and to purify the house of God. While that work was progressing, one of his officers found a precious copy of the law, and brought it to the king. Hearing it read by Shaphan, the scribe, the king became alarmed. Its sublime tenets, now so grossly violated, and the predicted chastisements on the transgressors thereof, saddened his heart. He rent his clothes, and sent the high-priest and some of his officers to the prophetess Huldah, that she should inquire of God in his behalf. Huldah sent him word saying: "Tell your master, the king of Judah, thus saith the Eternal: 'I will bring evil upon this place and its inhabitants, because they have forsaken me, and followed strange gods. But since thy heart became affected by the words of the law, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Eternal, therefore thine eyes shall not see the coming evil, but before it shall have come, thou wilt be gathered in peace to thy fathers.

When the king heard that message, he assembled all the men of Judah in the house of God, and read to

them the law. He then exhorted them to walk in the way of God, and obey His commandments; and they, promising obedience, willingly renewed the covenant. Another of Josiah's pious acts was the celebration of the feast of passover, with solemnity and magnificence.

In a battle with the Egyptian king, Pharaoh Necho, Josiah was mortally wounded, and soon thereafter he expired, deeply mourned by all the people. His reign had lasted thirty-one years.

"Happy is the man that feareth the Eternal; that greatly delighteth in his commandments." — Ps. cxii. 1.

"The righteousness of the upright will deliver them, but the treacherous are caught by their own sinful desire." — Prov. xi. 6.

"When the righteous are in authority, the people will rejoice; but the people groan when the wicked bear rule." — Prov. xxix. 2.

XXIV. JEHOAHAZ, JEHOIAKIM, AND JEHOICHIN.

17. JEHOAHAZ. After the death of Josiah, the people elected his younger son (Shallum) as their king. After a short reign of three months, Pharaoh Necho appeared, laid Judea under tribute, and sent Jehoahaz a captive to Egypt. The Egyptian monarch then called Josiah's oldest son, Eliakim, to the throne of Judah, and changed his name to

18. JEHOIAKIM (611-600). He did not concern himself about the welfare of the people, but rigorously exacted the tribute for his master. He was an impious, hard-hearted, selfish, and wicked man, and through his bad example led the people to idolatry and vice.

Pharaoh Necho's rule over Judea did not last long. Egypt was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar, to the great joy of the Israelites. But when the victor turned his

face toward Judea, their joy was changed into anxiety and terror. They fasted, and implored God's assistance against the Chaldeans. The prophet Jeremiah, however, through his secretary Baruch, rebuked the people, in the name of God, for their wickedness, and predicted the destruction of Jerusalem. Such severe truth was too much for the sinful people and their king. Instead of earnestly repenting and returning from their evil ways, they in vain searched for the prophet Jeremiah, to slay him together with spokesman.

In the mean time, Nebuchadnezzar with a mighty army appeared before Jerusalem, and besieged and captured it. Jehoiakim fell prisoner into his hands, and was to be deported into Babylon. But on humbling himself, he was released on a heavy tribute, while a large number of his people, together with rich treasures from the temple, were carried to Babylon. After three years Jehoiakim rebelled, whereupon Nebuchadnezzar, being otherwise engaged, ordered captains to chastise him. But before they with their hordes reached Jerusalem, Jehoiakim had died. He was so despised by his own subjects that they denied his remains even a burial, but threw them out in the open field as a prey to the beasts.

19. JEHOIACHIN (600), the son of the former, succeeded his father. After three months, being unable to maintain himself against the threatening storms of Nebuchadnezzar's forces, Jehoiachin surrendered. He was put in chains, and together with his mother, his wives, and 10,000 of his men, and the gold and silver remaining in the temple and the royal palace, were carried to Babylon. He there suffered in prison for

37 years, until Evil-Merodach, a successor of Nebuchadnezzar, released him. After the reduction of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar placed Mattaniah, whom he named Zedekiah, a third son of Josiah, upon the throne of Judah.

XXV. ZEDEKIAH.

20. ZEDEKIAH (600-587) was the last of the kings of Judah. Before ascending the throne, he had taken an oath of allegiance to the king of Babylon. During certain difficulties between Chaldea and Egypt, the patriotic and revolutionary party in Judah urged the king to revolt. Even among the captives in Babylon that feeling was strongly prevalent. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, however, earnestly tried to suppress that revolutionary spirit.

In the ninth year of his reign, Zedekiah, heedless of Jeremiah's renewed warnings, entered into a league with Pharaoh Necho, and refused to pay the yearly tribute to the Babylonian king. Jeremiah predicted the most disastrous results to Zedekiah's hazardous revolt, and feeling his inability to check it, he resolved to retire to his native city, Anathoth. On leaving, he was seized, and being accused of deserting to Babylon, was thrown into prison.

Soon, thereafter Nebuchadnezzar with his mighty army appeared in Judea, and on the tenth day of the tenth month Tebeth עֶשְׂרֵה כִּסְלִיב began to lay siege to Jerusalem. Jeremiah, that faithful servant of God and true friend of the people, even from prison cried aloud and exhorted them to surrender for their own preservation. But the revolutionary men de-

nounced him as a madman, and Zedekiah gave them permission to deal with him as they pleased. They took him out of prison and threw him into a miry pit that he might be suffocated. But when Zedekiah learned of Jeremiah's miserable and dangerous state, he deeply regretted having abandoned him to the cruel treatment of these fanatical, heartless men, and ordered his release and his return to the prison.

Famine, pestilence, and death, beyond description, were on the increase in the city as the siege continued, and the beleaguered bore these horrible sufferings with unrivalled self-denial for eighteen months. At last, about midnight of the 17th day of Thamuz (שְׁבַעַת עָשָׂר בְּתַמּוּז), the enemy forced an entrance into the city, and its fate was sealed. Zedekiah, together with many of his army, fled, but he was overtaken, transported to Riblah (about ten days' march from Jerusalem), and placed before the king of Babylon. There his two sons were slain in his presence, his eyes were put out, and thus bereaved and blind, Zedekiah was put in chains and brought to Babylon, where he suffered in prison, until death, the redeemer of all earthly troubles, made an end of his miseries.

Thus the kingdom of Judah terminated after an existence of about 860 years from the time of Joshua, 468 years from the reign of David, 388 years from the division of the kingdom, and 134 years from the destruction of the kingdom of Israel.

XXVI. DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE. GEDALIAH.

(2 Kings xxv. 8-36; Jer. xxxix.-xliv. 52.)

About three weeks after the capture of Jerusalem, Nebuzaradan, the general of Nebuchadnezzar's army, arrived in the city to complete the work of destruction. The city and temple were pillaged, the people transported into captivity, and on the 9th day of the 5th month Ab (אָב חֲמִישֶׁה) the principal dwellings

and the temple became a prey to the flames. The Highpriest Seraiah, together with the priest Zephaniah, and about sixty of the most distinguished of the people, were sent to Riblah and there suffered death. Jeremiah, however, was released from prison. Invited by Nebuzaradan to follow him to Babylon there to enjoy the king's favor as well as his own, Jeremiah begged to be allowed to remain near the desolate city and the ruins of the temple, with those of his poor brethren, who were to be retained, and his request was granted. Nebuzaradan then appointed Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, governor over those, who were to stay in the land to cultivate the ground, and especially charged him with the best care and support of the great Jewish prophet, Jeremiah. Gedaliah thereupon took the prophet to his dwelling-place, Mizpeh, and he remained with him.

Gedaliah, a kind, just, and faithful man, attended to his duties with zeal and integrity. He encouraged the people, saying: "Fear not the servants of the

Chaldeans; remain in the land, be submissive and faithful, and it will be well with you."

But in the seventh month, there came Ismael, the son of Nathaniah, of royal family, with ten other men to Mizpeh, and treacherously murdered Gedaliah and many others, both Jews and Chaldeans. The wicked criminals then fled with many of the people, whom they had forced to join them, but were pursued and overtaken by Johanan, who succeeded in freeing and bringing back the people, but the assassins escaped. Fearing, however, the vengeance of Nebuzaradan, Johanan, with all those still remaining in the land, fled to Egypt, followed, though reluctantly, by Jeremiah. Even there, the prophet directed his severe admonitions against the people, when they gave themselves up to idolatry, and predicted their destruction by Nebuchadnezzar during his approaching invasion of Egypt. As to the end of Jeremiah, traditions differ. According to one he was stoned by his own people in Egypt, while, according to another, he went later to Babylon and died there.

XXVII. DANIEL, HANANIAH, MISHAEL AND AZARIAH.

(Book of Daniel.)

The Israelites in Babylon were not subjected to the miseries, usually connected with captivity. They lived together rather as colonists, and could acquire land, which they there cultivated. Their long sufferings, as well as the constant exhortations of the prophets in their midst, had greatly improved their moral and religious character. They abhorred idolatry, and would rather suffer death than trespass the holy laws

of God. Foremost in the fear of God and in obeying his commands were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

By a special order of the king, they were selected to be instructed in the knowledge and wisdom of the Chaldeans, and supported at the king's own expense. They attended to their studies with diligence and zeal, and soon distinguished themselves above all others by their astonishing progress. But though royal students, they remained true Israelites. They would not partake of the food at the royal table, it being a violation to the dietary laws of Moses.

They, therefore, asked and conditionally received permission to live on vegetables and water for some time, and still there was no sign of paleness visible on their faces.

The plain and moderate diet, and the consciousness of not having committed sin, made them look happier, hardier, and healthier than all those who lived on the delicacies of the king's table. These four men also excelled all others in wisdom and learning. It was especially Daniel, surnamed Belteshazzar, who through God's assistance distinguished himself, by revealing to Nebuchadnezzar his forgotten dream and its meaning, which none of his wise men was able to reveal or interpret. And in so doing, Daniel did not ascribe the honor to himself, but solely to God, so that Nebuchadnezzar said: "It is true that your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and the revealer of secrets." He then elevated Daniel to the position of a ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and made him chief of the superintendents over all the wise men. Notwithstanding his expressed acknowledgment

of the true Deity, Nebuchadnezzar worshipped idols, and now set up a golden statue, sixty cubits high, and commanded that at a given signal all should fall down and worship it, under the penalty of being thrown into a burning furnace, should they disobey. All except Daniel's three friends, known by their changed names as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, obeyed.

Being reported to the king by some envious officers, and questioned by him as to their disobedience, they said: "O king, we shall never worship aught but the living God. He can save us even out of the burning furnace, and if He will not, we should rather die than to violate His laws." This bold answer so enraged the king that he ordered them to be thrown into a furnace seven times more strongly heated. The order of the king was immediately attended to; but while those, who were intrusted with the execution of the order, soon thereafter died of the burns caused by the extreme heat, the three men in the furnace did not suffer by it, even their clothing did not show the least sign of fire. Nebuchadnezzar went to the furnace, and on beholding the men unhurt, he exclaimed: Come out, ye servants of the Most High! Blessed be your God! who has rewarded your trust in Him delivered you." And he added: "Whosoever shall say aught against the God of Israel will surely be put to death."

"He who sitteth under the secret protection of the Most High, shall rest under the shadow of the Almighty." — Ps. xcii.

"It is better to seek shelter with God, than to trust in princes." — Ps. xviii. 9.

XXVIII. BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST.

(Daniel 5.)

Nebuchadnezzar died after a reign of forty-three

years, and his son Evil-Merodach succeeded him. He released Jehoiachin, king of Judah, from his long imprisonment and treated him very kindly. After a reign of two years he was succeeded by Belshazzar. In the fourth year of his reign, Belshazzar gave a great feast to his nobles and princes. In the midst of his festivities, he ordered all the golden and silver vessels that were taken from the temple at Jerusalem to be brought forth, to be used by his guests in drinking to the honor of his god.

While the feasting was at its height, a light became visible upon the wall, marking thereon strange characters. Trembling and fear seized the king, and he sent for his wise men that they might decipher and explain the strange handwriting. On their arrival, Belshazzar said to them: "Whosoever will read this writing and tell me its interpretation shall be clothed in purple, have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall rule as the third in the kingdom. To his great grief, the king learned of their inability to comply with his command. Upon the advice of the queen, Daniel was sent for, and the above-mentioned promises of reward were repeated to him. Daniel answered: "Let thy gifts, O king, remain in thy possession and bestow thy bounty on another; nevertheless, I will read the writing, and make known unto thee its meaning. "God, the Most High, gave kingdom, greatness, glory, and honor unto Nebuchadnezzar thy father. But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit hardened to deal presumptuously, he was cast down from his throne. And thou, his son Belshazzar, didst not humble heart, but hast lifted up thyself against the Eternal, and used the vessels of His house on thy

festive board, and honorest gods of gold and silver, which neither see, nor hear, nor know ; and the God, in whose hands thy soul is, thou hast not glorified. Therefore, He sent the hand to write these words, which read thus: "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN:" Mene—God has numbered thy kingdom and made an end of it. "Tekel"—Thou hast been weighed in the balance, and been found wanting. "Peres"—Thy kingdom has been divided and is given to the Medes and Persians. These words and their interpretation would have made a deep impression upon the king and his guests, had not their excessive intoxicating feasting benumbed their consciousness. During that very night the unconcerned king was surprised by Cyrus with an army of the Medes, and slain together with the nobles and princes, and Darius the Median was appointed king of Chaldea.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging ; and whosoever indulgeth therein will never be wise." — Prov. xxi.

"The drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness clotheth a man in rags." — Prov. xxiii. 21.

"Who have woe ? who have sorrow ? who have contention ? who redness of eyes ? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed drink." — Prov. xxiii. 29.

XXIX. DANIEL IN THE DEN OF LIONS.

(Daniel 6.)

Darius, the newly appointed king, intrusted the affairs of the land to one hundred and twenty officers, over whom he placed three governors. The chief among them was Daniel, whom Darius held in high esteem. The other officers, however, envied Daniel, and longed for an opportunity to destroy him. Failing to detect the least fault in his official career, they con-

cluded to strike him a blow with his own strongest weapon—the fear of God.

They induced Darius to issue an order that for thirty days no one should pray to God, but only to the king himself. (In ancient times heathen sovereigns often claimed reverence as divine beings.) The offender against that decree was to be thrown into a den of lions. Darius, pleased with that suggestion, issued the decree. Daniel continued his prayer to the Most High, three times daily, according to his regular practice. His enemies soon found him out and reported him to the king. With a heart full of sorrow and pity, Darius was inclined to save his friend; but being forced by the princes, and unable to find a proper pretext to suspend judgment, he was compelled to deliver Daniel to his fate. But God, who forsaketh not those who sincerely trust in Him, did not forsake Daniel in his dangerous position. The hungry lions did not harm him.

Darius, earnestly concerned about Daniel, could neither eat nor sleep. Early in the morning he went to the den to shed, as he thought, a tear of sympathy over the remains of his friend. But how great was his surprise and joy, on beholding Daniel, sitting among the ferocious animals calm and unhurt. Daniel was at once released, and his accusers were thrown into the den. They had scarcely reached the bottom of the cave, when the lions seized upon them, tore them to pieces, and devoured them.

Darius then issued the following order: “Be it decreed that all men in my kingdom fear the God of Daniel, who alone is the living and ever-existing God. He delivereth and rescueth. He, who displayeth signs

and wonders in heaven and on earth, He has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

Daniel then prospered during the reign of Darius, and even during the first year of the Persian king Cyrus.

"The Eternal is good unto those that hope in him, to the soul that seeketh him." — Lament. iii. 25.

"It is good that one should in silence wait for the salvation of the Eternal." — Lament. iii. 25, 26.

XXX. ISRAEL'S RETURN FROM THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY (540).

(Ezra 1-6.)

The children of Israel had lived about fifty-two years in the Babylonian captivity, when God in His mercy, and true to His promises through the prophets, remembered again His people, and moved the Persian king Cyrus to their deliverance. After having conquered Babylon, Cyrus, in the first year of his reign, issued the following proclamation: "God the Eternal hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and directed me to build for Him a house in Jerusalem. Be it therefore decreed that whosoever belongeth to the people of God, and is desirous of returning and assisting in rearing His sacred edifice, may leave in peace, and God be with him."

Then the heads of the families of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, about 50,000 in number, made ready to avail themselves of the privilege, while a good many others of the captives preferred to remain in their present homes. They, however, liberally presented their parting brethren with all things, necessary for their journey and their com-

fort, besides many horses and other animals, and Cyrus himself returned to them all the vessels of silver and gold which had been taken out of the temple.

Thus well prepared and provided, they left Babylon under the charge of Zerubabel, a prince out of the house of Judah, and of Joshua, a priest. With songs of praise to God and rejoicings in their deliverance, they reached Palestine, and forthwith began to settle down in towns and cities. With the approach of the seventh month Tishri, they all assembled at Jerusalem, erected the altar at the former sacred spot, offered sacrifices to their God, and celebrated the feast of booths at the usual time. In the second year after their return (539), preparations for the house of God had been so far advanced that its foundation could be laid. That interesting ceremony was accompanied with music and singing by the priests and Levites, and all the people joined in responding: "Give thanks unto the Eternal for He is good, His kindness endureth forever."

But amidst the shoutings of gladness and joy, there was likewise heard some loud weeping by some of the aged men, who remembered the glory of the first temple.

"The Eternal fulfilleth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers." — Isaiah xlv. 26.

"He said of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and all my pleasure shall be perform, even saying of Jerusalem, it shall be built, and the temple's foundation shall be laid." — Isaiah xlv. 28.

"Those that sow in tears shall reap with joyful song." — Ps. cxxxvi. 5.

XXXI. THE DISTURBANCES OF THE SAMARITANS.

The Samaritans were a mixture composed of low people left in the country at the time it was conquered by the Assyrians, and of heathen colonists sent there from Babylon. When they learned that the Israelites undertook to rebuild the temple, they came forward and declaring their affinity to Israel, desired to join in the sacred work. Their request, however, was indignantly rejected by the leaders and the people, who looked upon them as idolaters and adversaries. And the Israelites were not mistaken in their preconceived opinions. The Samaritans soon pursued a hostile conduct toward their neighbors, put all kinds of obstacles in their way, sneered at them and abused them, and through letters of serious complaint to Artaxerxes at the Persian Court, as well as through bribes, they succeeded so well that a decree was issued forbidding the continuation of the work.

But, the malignity of the Samaritans at their success did not last forever. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah appeared in the midst of their brethren, praised the leaders and their high mission, and encouraged the people to resume their work, predicting that it would prosper in their hands. The stirring words of these prophets had the desired effect upon the leaders and builders. The work was vigorously resumed and completed. For Darius, to whom the enemies of Israel had sent another letter of complaint, made searches in the royal records, and on finding the decree of

Cyrus, ordered that the building of the temple should be carried on without interruption, and that all required assistance should be furnished out of the royal treasury.

In the sixth year of Darius, on the third day of Adar, the dedication of the second temple took place with the greatest solemnity and rejoicings (521).

In the following month, Nissan, the Passover festival was celebrated.

“Unless the Eternal do build the house, in vain labor they that build on it.” — Ps. cxxvii. 1.

XXXII. MORDECAI AND ESTHER (484).

While the Israelites once more enjoyed in Palestine peace and quiet, their brethren in the vast Persian kingdom were in imminent danger of being extirpated in one day. This murderous plan was the work of a certain Haman, the first minister at the court of the Persian king Ahasuerus. Being an unrelenting enemy of the Jews, Haman found a pretext for his intended massacre, in the fact that the Jew Mordecai, who bowed in reverence to God alone, would not bow to him as all others did. The haughty and wicked Haman thought it too little satisfaction to avenge the offense of Mordecai on him alone; nay, the entire nation should satisfy his vengeance, and by nothing less than their lives. To carry out his cruel purpose, Haman required the permission of the king. He, therefore, approached his sovereign and said: “There is a people scattered in the provinces of thy dominion, whose laws are different from those of all others, and who themselves do not obey the laws of the king,

and it is no profit to the king to tolerate them. If it should please the king to have them destroyed, then I would weigh ten thousand talents of silver into the treasury of the king." Ahasuerus thereupon replied: "Thou mayest keep thy silver, and deal with the people as thou desirest." Haman, overjoyed at his success, fixed by lot (פִּינִי) the thirteenth day of Adar as the day of the utter destruction of all the Israelites in the kingdom, and sent out his orders accordingly.

The news of the projected slaughter filled the hearts of the doomed victims with terror and gloomy forebodings. They wept, fasted, and prayed to their God, whose help is nearest, when danger is greatest. And their hope was not in vain. God the Omniscent, to whom past, present, and future are alike known, became their protector. His wise Providence provided against the calamity, before it had even threatened, in the following marvellous, though natural manner. The queen, Vashti, refusing to obey the king's order to appear in the midst of his dissipating guests, on the seventh day of a protracted feast, so enraged the king that, in accordance with Haman's counsel, he dethroned her. In his selection of a suitable person as queen in place of Vashti, the choice of the king from among many fell upon an orphaned Jewish damsel named Esther, the cousin of Mordecai, her guardian. Esther was neighter asked for, nor did she mention her nationality, and though now queen, she still remained the affectionate, obedient adopted daughter of Mordecai, who frequently visited her. On one of these visits, he overheard the plot of two court servants to poison the king. Mordecai reported the matter to Esther, and through her the king was informed

thereof. The servants were condemned to death, and the faithful conduct of Mordecai found a place in the chronicles of the king.

Naturally, then, when his nation was in deepest distress, caused by Haman's death-warrant, Mordecai hastened, in deep mourning, to queen Esther's court, to advise her thereof, and to bid her to use her influence with the king in behalf of her innocent people. On hearing the terrible report, Esther sent word back that no one is permitted to approach the king unless sent for. Then Mordecai returned answer, saying: "Think not that thou wouldst be saved, while thy people would perish. God can save us by some other means; but thou mightest well consider, whether but for this very purpose thou hast attained to the royal dignity." In reply to this message, Esther ordered a fast of three days, and promised to approach the king uncalled for, and thus venture her life for the sake of her people; for, said she, "if I am to die, I will die."

XXXIII. ESTHER PETITIONS BEFORE THE KING.

The words of Esther were readily transmitted to all the Israelites at Shushan, and the fast was duly solemnized. On the third day of the fast, Esther donned her royal robe, and tremblingly approached the throne of the king, and she found grace in his eyes. Stretching forth his golden scepter (a sign of grace), the king said to her: "What aileth thee, Queen Esther, and what is thy request? Speak, and if it be equal to half my kingdom, it shall be granted." Esther modestly replied: "May it please the king to come to-day with Haman to a feast which I have prepared

for thee." Ahasuerus assented and at once sent the order to Haman.

Enjoining the festive board at the queen's palace, Ahasuerus reassured Esther of his readiness to grant any petition or request which she might ask for. Esther thereupon tendered another invitation to the king and Haman for the next day, which was likewise accepted with grace.

Haman left the queen's palace with pride and joy. But his joy, like that of all the wicked, was of short duration. On beholding Mordecai at the gate of the king's court, who did not bow to him, his vanity became hurt, and his joy was changed into anger and hatred.

Arriving at home he related to his wife the high esteem he was held in with the queen, who would not dine with the king without him. "But," said he, "all this honor and distinction are worthless to me, as long as I must endure the sight of the Jew Mordecai. Then said his wicked wife, Seresh, to him: "Order a gallows to be built, fifty cubits high, and to-morrow speak to the king to have Mordecai hanged thereon; then thou mayest enjoy coming feast of the queen with a merry heart."

Pleased with this murderous suggestion, Haman unhesitatingly gave the orders for the construction of the gallows.

XXXIV. HAMAN'S FALL.

On the very night, when the workmen were hard at work to execute Haman's order, king Ahasuerus was both restless and sleepless. To divert his mind, he commanded his attendant to read to him from the

book of Chronicles. It so happened that among other records also that of Mordecai was read. As the fact of Mordecai's faithful conduct, in saving the life of the king, reached the ears of the king, he interrupted the reader by asking: "What honor and distinction have been shown to Mordecai on that account?" None at all was the prompt reply. "Look who is outside," commanded the king. And when the servant returned, answering that it was Haman, the king said: "Let him come in." (Haman came so early to obtain the king's permission to hang Mordecai.) Haman entered and was accosted by the king's query: "What shall be done to the man, whom the king delighteth to honor?" The haughty Haman, in his vanity, thought that but he himself could be that man, and therefore replied: "Let that man be clothed with kingly garments, and his head be adorned with the royal crown; let him be placed upon one of the finest horses of the king, and led throughout the city by one of the first officers of the king, proclaiming: 'Thus the man is honored, in whom the king greatly delighteth.'" "Do as thou hast spoken to the Jew Mordecai," now said the king, "fail in nothing that thou hast suggested."

Haman obeyed, and, when through with his degrading errand, hurried homeward, downcast, sorrowful, and angry. Then his wife said to him these prophetic words: "If thou hast been once caused to fall by one of the seed of the Jews, thou wilt be unable to rise again." They were still bewailing the sudden change for the worse in their wicked designs, when the king's messengers came in to hasten Haman to the feast of the queen. During that feast, as twice before, the king beckoned the queen to state her request.

And Esther said: "If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, may it please my lord to spare my life and the lives of my people, for we are doomed to utter destruction. I should have been silent, if the cruel tyrant, who cares not in the least for the king's losses, had sold us as servants or slaves." Then the king enragedly asked: "Who is he, and where is he, whose mind could dare to conceive such iniquity?" And Esther replied: "This wicked Haman is the deadly enemy of the Jews." The king rose in anger and went to the palace-garden to pacify his mind, and Haman, pale and with trembling, fell upon his knees before Esther, praying for his life. The king soon returned, and finding Haman kneeling before the queen, said: "How darest thou, wicked man, thus approach the queen!" Then one of the servants said: "There stands a gallows fifty cubits high, erected by Haman to hang Mordecai upon it." And the king said: "Hang Haman thereon." The king's word was at once executed, and Haman suffered death on the same gallows which he had erected for Mordecai.

"Like brooks of water is a king's heart in the hand of the Eternal, whithersoever it pleaseth him he turns it."—Prov. xxi. 1.

"The righteous is delivered out of distress, and the wicked cometh in his stead."—Prov. xi. 8.

XXXV. MORDECAI'S OFFICIAL ADVANCEMENT.

Esther informed the king of her relationship to Mordecai, whereupon Ahasuerus took off his signet-ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai, thus promoting him to the highest office of

the court. Upon Esther's appeal to the king to graciously recall Hamon's issued death-warrant against the Jews, Ahasuerus stated that, according to the statelaws, a decree, written in the name of the king and bearing his seal, cannot be revoked. "But," he continued, "thou and Mordecai may, in my name, send forth another decree, satisfactory to yourselves, and attach my seal thereto."

Thereupon Mordecai called the king's scribes, who, by his command, issued a new decree, in which the Jews were ordered to rise in a body in self-defence, and utterly destroy all who would rise against them on the appointed 13th day of Adar.

This decree, hurriedly sent by messengers on swift horses, had the double effect: it brought relief and joy to the Jews, and disappointment and dismay to their enemies. Many of them became worshippers of the God of Israel, and those others, who could not suppress their hatred and their blood-thirsty spirit, were deservedly slain by the Jews to the last man. Thus, through God's special providence, manifested but by natural means, a long threatened calamity was brought to naught, the innocently accused and condemned became the victors and masters, and the days of gloom, fear, and sorrow were changed into days of light, gladness, and joy.

In memory of that great deliverance, the Israelites yearly celebrate on the 14th day of Adar the festival of Purim, as a day of thanksgiving and rejoicing.

"He is the Eternal our God, over all the earth are his decrees
He remembereth his covenant forever."—Ps. cv. 7, 8.

XXXVI. EZRA (461).

(Ezra 7-10.)

In the seventh year of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, that monarch, being well disposed toward the Jews (probably on account of their faithfulness to Xerxes), commissioned Ezra, one of the captives at Babylon, to go up to Jerusalem, inquire into the affairs of his restored brethren, and act in their behalf in accordance with his own judgment. The king's commission, at the same time, invited all of his Israelitish subjects to return with Ezra, if they so desired, and furthermore ordered his treasurers to furnish all the necessary means for that important expedition. Like Moses of old, at the beginning of the history of his people, Ezra, the son of the late ill-fated high-priest Seraiah, appears at this period destined by God for the purification and moral elevation of Israel. Thoroughly versed in the law of Moses, possessed of great energy and zeal, and faithful to his God, Ezra was an excellent selection for so important a mission. The Israelites were just then in need of such a governor, for through their family connections with the surrounding heathen's, they were fast departing from the worship of the true God. Abundantly provided with silver and gold, and all other requirements for his long journey and its cause, Ezra with about 6,000 persons set out during the first month of Nisan, and after five months' travel, safely arrived at Jerusalem.

Having presented his letters of appointment to the

officers and rulers, Ezra, with feelings of gratitude to God, repaired to the temple and deposited into its treasury all the rich valuables in his possession to the honor of God.

True to his commission, Ezra made inquiries as to the religious and moral condition of the people, and to his deep sorrow became convinced of their serious departure from the law of Moses. Full of grief he prostrated himself before his God, making confession of their guilt, and fervently praying in their behalf. The rulers and the people, moved by Ezra's sincerity, became conscious of their failings, acknowledged their sins, and promised to return to God.

Ezra, thereupon, convened all the people in and about Jerusalem, and after severely rebuking their many trespasses, exhorted them to correct their misdeeds, cease to do evil and to lead a God-pleasing life. With great earnestness he pointed to the importance of the sanctity of the family, and requested them to make and to keep it free from any corrupting or foreign influences.

Ezra's words failed not in making a deep impression upon the assembled multitude. They exclaimed with tears and sorrow: "We have sinned against God, oh! that He may receive us again in His favor!"

XXXVII. NEHEMIAH (448).

(Nehemiah 1-4.)

Nehemiah was another of Israel's faithful and valiant sons, who took an active part in the affairs of the people in those gloomy days. Though intrusted with the honorable position of cup-bearer in the palace of Artaxerxes, his heart was still longing to assist his brethren at Jerusalem, and to advance their interests. That feeling grew the more intense, when he heard through

some men of Judea of their afflictions and of the desolate state of the holy city. He therefore mourned and fasted, and prayed to God to incline the king's heart to permit him to return to Jerusalem. Nehemiah's depressed spirit attracted the attention of the king, and he asked him, saying: "Why lookest thou so sad?" Nehemiah explained the cause of his grief, and on his request, to be allowed to go up to Jerusalem and assist in rebuilding the city, obtained leave to go, and moreover received letters from his sovereign to the governors west of Euphrates to aid his journey, and others to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, to supply him with timber. At his arrival at Jerusalem, he conferred with the rulers and officers on the importance of repairing and rebuilding the walls of the city to guard against any sudden outside attack, as well as of his resolve to undertake the work. And as Nehemiah spoke of the favors of king Artaxerxes to him, and of the power he had invested him with, the people at once willingly offered their immediate assistance.

When the Samaritans heard of this new undertaking, they sneered at the projectors and threatened to oppose their projects; but Nehemiah heedless, of their sneers, scorns, and threats, fearlessly divided his men into divisions, armed them, and set them to work. In order to guard them still better against any attacks, he placed armed bodies of men at various posts, and thus fully prepared for any event, the work steadily progressed, so that after fifty-two days of hard labor, the walls of the city were completed. Amidst gladness and rejoicings the great work was dedicated with songs of praise and thanks to God, as well as with the offering of numerous sacrifices.

Nehemiah next directed his attention to rebuild the ruined city, and to reinhabit it, in which undertaking he likewise succeeded. Many of the distinguished families voluntarily expressed their readiness to remove to the city, and the rest of the people willingly submitted to Nehemiah's plan, that every tenth family designated by lots, should dwell therein. He then re-established the customary compensations of the priests and Levites, so that when free from care for their own subsistence, they could devote their time to the services of the temple.

"Like brooks of water is a king's heart in the hand of the Eternal; withersover it pleaseth him, does he turn it." — Prov. xxi. 1.

"The desire of the righteous is only good." — Prov. x. 23.

"Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted." — Prov. i. 11.

XXXVIII. NEHEMIAH, THE PROTECTOR OF THE POOR AND OPPRESSED.

Nehemiah, having repaired and rebuilt the city and its walls and gates for the security of the people, now began to improve and reform the moral condition of his brethren. He had endeared himself to them through his own unselfish and self-sacrificing example, by not exacting from them any tax for his own services as governor; nay he, moreover, sustained daily at his own expense one-hundred and fifty men and their rulers at his table, besides many others from the environs of Jerusalem.

Upon the complaint of the poorer classes against the oppressions of their wealthier brethren, Nehemiah felt deeply grieved, and assembled the heartless men and earnestly admonished them, saying: "You lend money

to your poor brethren and require as pledges their houses, fields, and vineyards, and even their sons and daughters, well knowing beforehand that they are unable to redeem them. Such actions are in violation of the law of Moses: they are inhuman and therefore greatly displeasing in the eyes of God. Give back to them their pledges, I pray you, assist your poor brethren with money, corn, wine and oil, according to the blessings of the Eternal your God which He has given you, so that your poor brethren may live with you." These words had the desired effect upon the people, and they said, as with one voice: "We will do as thou hast said."

About this time Ezra reappeared in the midst of the people, and together with Nehemiah continued to secure and to strengthen their moral resolutions through instruction and persuasion. He read to a large assembly, convened for the purpose, the law of Moses, and to their better understanding, had it translated and explained into their own language by the Levites, whereupon the people bowed in reverence to God and promised to fulfil it.

After a successful career of twelve years in the service of his brethren, Nehemiah returned to his former post of honor, at the court of Artaxerxes (436). They, however, remained not faithful to their avowed promises, but soon thereafter fell into the same old errors they were found guilty of at former times. Upon receiving these sad reports, Nehemiah revisited Jerusalem (430), and as a truly religious leader once more exercised his energies and his influence in their behalf. He again pointed out to them the importance of guarding the sacredness of the family circle against and keeping it

free from the alluring influences of their heathen neighbors, and enjoined upon them the duty of upholding the sanctity of the Sabbath. To prevent its violation more effectively, he made a standing rule to close the gates of the city with the beginning of the Sabbath and keep it shut until its end.

Through the zeal of Ezra and Nehemiah, the people at large became inspired with a true religious spirit. In order to guard and to foster it the more, forms of divine worship, consisting of prayers and the reading of the law, were instituted in all the various towns and villages inhabited by Jews, while the temple at Jerusalem remained the religious centre for all Israel. Even on the regular market days at Jerusalem such services were held for the benefit of the visiting farmers and traders from the neighborhood. The formerly existing arbitrary conditions among the people were put to and by the appointment of just judges in their midst for the settlement of minor cases between contesting parties, and a tribunal of judges in Jerusalem for more important ones and for religious ordinances.

Some, however, among the Israelites, who were displeased with the stringent measures of Nehemiah, joined the ranks of the neighboring Samaritans, while others, on account of disobedience having been expelled from the congregation of Israel, followed them. In order to please these new-comers and to induce others to follow, Sanballat, the head of the Samaritans, asked and obtained permission from the Persian court to build a temple of their own on Mt. Gerizim, in which at its completion the daily services were conducted in the same manner as it was the prac-

tice at Jerusalem, and in course of time the Samaritans became a Jewish sect.

Having thus, from the purest motives, worked for the physical and the spiritual welfare of his people for a number of years, Nehemiah could justly pray to God, saying: "Remember me, O my God, and wipe not out the pious deeds which I have done."—Nehem. xiii. 14.

Simultaneously with Nehemiah worked the prophet Malachi for the reformation of his people. Conspicuously in his addresses are the following two verses: "Have we not all One father? Has not One God created us? Why then should we deal treacherously one with another, and profane the covenant of our fathers?" — Malachi ii. 10.

"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, whom I commanded on Horeb statutes and ordinances for all Israel." — Malachi iii. 22.

APPENDIX.

ELEAZAR AND THE MOTHER AND HER SEVEN SONS.

After the death of Ezra and Nehemiah (400), the Israelites for a number of years enjoyed quiet and peace under Persian rule. After the subjugation and dissolution of Persia through Alexander of Macedonia, Judea came under the power of that mighty conqueror (332-320), and after his death in Babylon, Palestine was governed by Egyptian rulers (312-204), until, in the year 175, Judea fell into the hands of the Syrian, Antiochus IV., Epiphanes, under whose cruel and despotic rule the sufferings of the Israelites became terrible in the extreme. He aimed at the destruction of the Jewish religion, and therefore prohibited, under penalty of death, the study of the law, as well as all religious observances. He desecrated the sanctuary, by placing one of his idols in it; he burnt the book of the law, broke down the altar, demolished the walls of the city, and murdered men, women and children who would not bow and offer sacrifice to them.

Many yielded to the despot's behest to escape torture, while many others preferred to die the martyr's death, rather than to sin against God. One of their number was the aged and venerable Eleazar. Neither force nor temptation could induce him to violate the law of Moses, to partake of forbidden meat. He with-

stood heroically the severest tortures, and even when the servants of the king, out of pity, secretly provided him with meat of which he could partake, he rejected their kind offer, saying: "Should I play the hypocrite and set a bad example to the young? Nay, I will die as I have lived, in the fear of God," and amidst the most horrid sufferings his pious soul departed.

In a similar manner acted a pious mother and her seven sons. When the wicked king tried to induce them to deny their God, she addressed her children, saying:

"Be not deceived by the king's promises, and fear not his threats; there is another, everlasting life, which God holds in store for those who faithfully trust in Him." And thus girded with a firm faith in God, the mother saw her seven sons, one by one, deliver up his life under the most severe sufferings, and at last died herself.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me." — Ps. xxiii. 4.

II. THE MACCABEES.

About this time there lived in Modin, a small village near Joppa, the priest Mattathias with his five sons, named: Jochanan, Simon, Judah, Eleazar and Jonathan. Apelles, an officer of the king, in his official tour to enforce his master's decree, came thither, and under promises of great distinction and special favors bade Mattathias, the most distinguished of the place, to sacrifice to the idol of the king; but was met with a firm refusal. Shortly thereafter an Israelite approached

the altar in obedience to the officer's command, when the aged Mattathias instantly stepped forward and slew the apostate, while his sons rushed toward the officer and slew him. They then fled to the mountains, followed by small bands of their faithful brethren, and, amidst sufferings and privation, made frequent successful attacks upon their tyrants.

When the aged father felt that the end of his life was well nigh, he exhorted his sons to remain true to their God and manfully fight His battles. After his death, Judah, the most valiant among them, became their leader (166). With the words :

(Makkabee : מִי כְמוֹכָהּ בָּאֵלִים יְיָ : מ"כ"ב"י :

"Who is like Thee among the mighty, O Eternal"

upon his lips and on his flag, he led his small band of about 6,000 men through many battles to glorious victory. One general after the other, with mighty armies, was defeated with immense losses of men and stores, until at last the enemies retreated, and hostilities ceased. Judah then marched to Jerusalem (165), cleansed the sanctuary, rebuilt the altar, and on the 25th day of Kislev the temple was rededicated with songs of thanksgiving and praises, and the usual sacrificial offerings.

In memory of this great delivery, we celebrate yearly on the 25th day of the ninth month Kislev the feast of Dedication תְּנוּפָה by offering thanks and praises to God, and kindling lights, which latter beautiful ceremony is to signify that the pure light of true religion

will in the end ever conquer the darkness of unbelief and idolatry.

“A lamp unto my feet is thy word, and a light unto my path.”—Ps. cxix. Nun.

Antiochus, on hearing of the victory of Judah, burnt with anger and the thirst of vengeance. Having at the same time sustained losses in Persia, he concluded that the Jews should now feel his mighty arm, and Jerusalem be transformed into a huge graveyard.

But his evil devices fell upon his own head. While on his way to Jerusalem, he fell from his carriage and was dangerously hurt. Amidst the severest tortures of body and of conscience, he acknowledged his wickedness, and in mournful strains he uttered his regret, but it was too late; he died a most excruciating and miserable death. After about two hundred and thirty-five years, during the reign of the Roman emperor Vespasian, on the 9th day of Ab, Jerusalem and the temple were again destroyed by fire under the leadership of Titus, the son of the emperor, when the second Jewish state ceased, and Israel was dispersed among all the nations of the earth, to enter on its original mission **וְהָיָה**

כְּרִכָּה to become a blessing to the world at large.

DEAR CHILDREN:—At the conclusion of my work, let me urge you to live up to your sacred trust. Act honorably and faithfully your part in whatever vocation of life you might be placed. Remain true to your religion and to your country, and God will be your shield and your mightiest protector. And in parting

from you at present, let me recommend to your youthful hearts the beautiful words of the Psalmist (Ps. cxxi.):

"I lift up my eyes unto the mountains,
 Whence shall come my help?
 My help is from the Eternal,
 The Maker of heaven and earth.
 He will not suffer thy foot to slip.
 Thy keeper does not slumber;
 He slumbereth not and sleepeth not—
 The guardian of Israel.
 The Eternal is thy keeper and thy shade,
 He is on thy right hand.
 By day the sun shall not strike thee,
 Nor the moon by night.
 The Eternal will guard thee against all evil,
 He will guard thy soul.
 The Eternal will guard thy going out and thy coming in
 now and forevermore."

